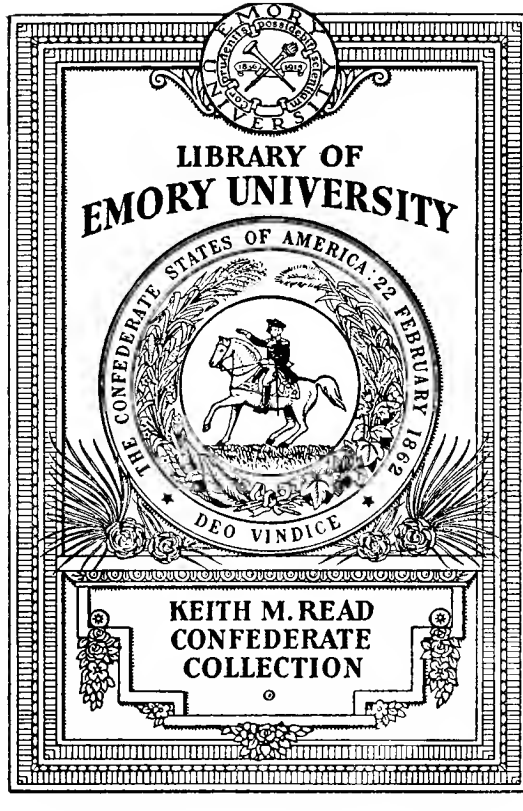
ARMY LIFE IN VIRGINIA

Letters from the 12th Reg't Vt. Vols.

BY

GEORGE GRENVILLE BENEDICT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ARMY LIFE IN VIRGINIA

LETTERS

FROM THE TWELFTH VERMONT REGIMENT AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF VOLUNTEER SERVICE IN THE WAR FOR THE UNION, 1862-63

BY

GEORGE GRENVILLE BENEDICT

PRIVATE AND LIEUTENANT TWELFTH REGIMENT VERMONT VOLUNTEERS AND AIDE-DE-CAMP UPON THE STAFF OF THE SECOND VERMONT BRIGADE

BURLINGTON:
FREE PRESS ASSOCIATION.
1895.

TO MY

COMRADES LIVING AND DEAD

OF THE

TWELFTH REGIMENT VERMONT VOLUNTEERS

PREFACE.

The letters collected in this little volume are taken from the columns of the Burlington (Vt.) *Free Press*, to which paper they were written by its then junior editor.

Describing scenes in army life, sketched *currente calamo* as they passed before the eye of the writer, with no attempt at writing history and containing little of "blood and thunder," it is not supposed that they will have much interest for the general reader; nor would they be now reprinted except in compliance with repeated requests from a number of my army comrades who have expressed a desire to preserve in permanent form what happened to be almost the only record published at the time (though but a fragmentary and imperfect one) of the service of the regiment to which they belonged. It was a service at best comparatively uneventful, and it is now, after over thirty years of peace, passing into oblivion for most of those who were not directly connected with it. For those who shared it, however, these letters seem still to have interest, and such as they are they are submitted in their present shape without further apology

G. G. B.

Burlington, October, 1895.

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FROM THE TWELFTH REGIMENT.

RENDEZVOUS AT BRATTLEBORO—FIRST GUARD DUTY

IN CAMP, BRATTLEBORO, Sept. 26, 1862.

Dear Free Press :

This correspondence must begin a little back of the natural starting point of our leaving Burlington. The uppermost thing in my mind, as I write, is a sense of the kindly interest in the Howard Guard,* on the part of the citizens of Burlington, shown by the concourse which crowded the Town Hall on Wednesday evening to give emphasis to our sword presentation to our worthy captain; by the kind sentiments expressed and the hearty God bless you's uttered there and then ; and by what seemed to us the turn out *en masse* of the town of Burlington to see us off

*The regiment consisted of ten companies of Vermont Militia, reorganized under Pres. Lincoln's call of August 4, 1862, for 300.000 militia to serve for nine months. The Burlington Company had been known in the State Militia as the Howard Guard. The Company had in its ranks twelve men of collegiate education, and other substantial citizens who had not felt able to leave their business or professions for three years, but were glad to enlist for a shorter term; and the regiment as a whole was largely composed of such citizens.

the next morning. Those demonstrations touched every man in the Guard, and will not soon be forgotten by them. It was an unfortunate thing for us, that our departure was so hasty as to deprive most of us of the opportunity of giving the final hand-shake to our friends.

Our ride to Brattleboro was a pleasant one. We were joined at Brandon by the Brandon company, at Rutland by the Rutland company, and at Bellows Falls by the long train with the remainder of the regiment. At every station, the people seemed to be out in multitudes, and from the doors and windows of every farm-house on the way the handkerchiefs were fluttering. These nine months regiments appear to be objects of especial interest on the part of the citizens of Vermont, and I trust they will fulfil the expectations of their friends. I am told that the arrival of a whole regiment, in camp, on the day set, is something unprecedented here.

We reached Brattleboro about half-past four o'clock. The regiment had a dusty march enough to camp, where, after considerable exertion on the part of Col. Blunt, it was finally formed into line, in front of the barracks. The companies are, most of them, deficient in drill,

and the men have in fact, about everything to learn. They did, however, finally get into line parallel with the barracks without having the line of buildings moved to correspond with the line of men, which for a time appeared to be the only way in which any kind of parallelism could be established between the two. The companies are composed for the most part, however, of men who will learn quickly, and a few days of steady drill will tell another story We broke ranks just at dark, received our blankets, woolen and india-rubber, selected our bunks, and marched off to supper, which was abundant and good enough for anybody, sauced as it was with a hearty appetite.

The barracks are houses of plain boards, ten in number, within which wooden bunks are ranged for the men, in double tiers. I cannot speak from experience,as yet, as to their comfort, your humble servant having been among the fortunate individuals who, constituting the first eight (alphabetically) of the company, were the first detailed for guard duty This I found to mean a couple of hours of such rest as could be extracted from the soft side of a hemlock plank in the guard house, with sergeants and corporals

and "reliefs" coming in and going out, and always in interested conversation when not in active motion; then two hours (from 11 to 1) of pacing a sentry beat, musket on shoulder, over what by this time is a path, but then was an imaginary, and in the darkness, uncertain, line on the dew-soaked grass of the meadow; then about three hours more of that "rest" I have alluded to, but this time I found the plank decidedly softer, and slept in spite of the trifling drawbacks mentioned; then two hours more of sentry duty; and then—volunteers having been called for for special guard duty—two hours more of the same. By this time it was well into the morning.

On the whole it was quite a night, for the first one in camp. I rather liked it. To be sure, if the only proper business of the night be sleeping, it was not as successful a piece of business in that way as could be conceived of, but I flatter myself that it was a successful effort at guard duty. Not a rebel broke in, nor a roving volunteer broke out, over my share of the line, and if there was no sleeping there was a good deal of other things. There was, for instance, a fine opportunity for the study of astronomy; ditto, for meditation. I

PRIVATE G. G. BENEDICT,

12TH VERMONT VOLS.

read in the bright planets success for the good cause, and glory for the Twelfth Vermont, and mused—on what not. This was one of the finest opportunities to see the Connecticut valley mist rise from the river and steal over the meadows, giving a shadowy veil to the trees, a halo apiece to the stars, and adding to the stature of my comrade sentinels till they loomed like Goliaths of Gath through the fog-cloud. There was also the opportunity to see the morning break, not with the grand crash of bright sunrise, but cushioned and shaded by that same fog-bank, till the break was of the softest and most gradual. Who will say that these are not compensations, and who wouldn't be a soldier?

To-day the regiment is doing nothing but settle itself in its quarters. If it does anything worth telling, I shall try to tell it to you. B.

II.

Equipment and Inspection.

Camp Lincoln,
Brattleboro, Sept. 30, 1862.

Dear Free Press:

Maj. Austine is expected here on Friday morning next, to muster in the Twelfth, which he will

do on that day, provided the overcoats and other equipments shall have arrived. It is the intention of Adjutant-General Washburn not to let the regiment pass out of his hands until it is fully equipped throughout. The quality of the articles thus far furnished us by Quartermaster General Davis, is a guaranty that our fit-out will be of the best. With our arms we are especially pleased. They are the Springfield rifle of 1862—the best arm in the world, light, strong, well-balanced. The overcoats, belts, cartridge boxes and knapsacks remain to be furnished. I understand that they are on the way from New York.

It has been found impossible to procure "A" tents, and the regiment will be supplied on its arrival at Washington with the little "shelter tents," so-called, which are packed and carried on the shoulders of the men on the march.

The physical inspection of our company took place yesterday, conducted by Brigade Surgeon Phelps. The men, as you probably know, undergo the examination *in puris naturalibus*, in squads of about twenty at a time, and are required to march, kick, throw about their arms, etc., in a way which, under the sharp eye of Dr. Phelps, soon

discloses any stiffness or disability In conjunction with the very close individual inspection instituted at the time of enlistment it makes a pretty thorough piece of work. There was found to be but one of our company with regard to whom there was any doubt as to his physical fitness for a soldier's duties—and he will probably pass. About a baker's dozen of the whole regiment have been inspected out—showing a remarkably high average of health and condition. In fact Dr. Phelps remarked in my hearing that he had never inspected a regiment in which he found so few who must be thrown out.

Yours, B.

III.

Knapsack Drill and Review

Camp Lincoln,
Brattleboro, Oct. 4, 1862.

Dear Free Press:

An order was read at dress parade Thursday night, announcing the appointment of Col. E. H. Stoughton, of the Fourth Vermont, to the position of Commandant of this Post, and his assumption of the duties of the station. He has estab-

lished his headquarters just outside the grounds, and it is understood will proceed actively with the work of disciplining these five regiments.

The overcoats, knapsacks, belts, cartridge boxes and haversacks were distributed yesterday morning, completing our equipment. The articles seem to be very good, with the exception, perhaps, of the knapsacks and haversacks, which might be better without injury to the service or to the feelings of the troops. They are, however, I suppose, the best that could be procured. The whole form an amount of harness which strikes the unsophisticated recruit with a slight feeling of dismay. Is it possible, he says to himself, that all this pile of traps is only my share, and is all to be carried on my devoted shoulders? Why have they made them all so heavy? What earthly reason now, for cutting these straps out of such an almighty thick side of harness leather, and making them so broad, too? However, we took them all, and were, I trust, duly thankful for the same.

Yesterday afternoon was rendered memorable by our first knapsack drill. The orders were for a review of the regiment, fully equipped, with knapsacks packed. The overcoat was accord-

ingly folded and placed within the knapsack; the change of underclothing, socks, etc., ditto; and the woolen blanket rolled tightly within the rubber blanket and then strapped on the top. The whole concern, with the straps, weighs on an average about thirty-five pounds, and there goes *science*, let me tell you, to the production of a skillfully packed knapsack.

The review was considered, I am told, quite a fine affair by the numerous array of spectators. Let me endeavor to give you an inside view of the affair, as it seemed to one in the ranks. We of the rank and file did not think it so fine. At two o'clock, then, each private hoisted on to his shoulders his knapsack, packed as above, slung around him his haversack and canteen, buckled on his cartridge-box and shoulder-belt, and musket in hand, took his place in the ranks. The sun has come out hot. About fifteen minutes of waiting takes place before moving into line, in the course of which the luckless volunteer becomes distinctly conscious of a weight on his back. He straightens up manfully, however, and endeavors, when the order comes, to step out with his customary light step. But that, he finds, is not quite so easy. He is *logy*. He weighed 145 pounds half an

hour ago, now he weighs 190. That knapsack gives an undue momentum to his about-face, and bumps uncomfortably against his neighbor's as he faces from file to front. But we are in line now The captain, astonished at the unwonted clumsiness of his men, labors hard, but with only moderate success, to "dress" them into a straight line, and there we stand, arms at shoulder. There is drumming and fifing and stepping into place of officers; but you notice little of what is going on. Your attention is mainly directed to a spot between your shoulder blades, which feels peculiarly In short it *aches*. The sensation gradually spreads through your back and shoulders, and is complicated with a sense of suffocation from the pressure of the straps across the chest. The perspiration bursts from every pore. You hear a groan from your comrade on the left, and are comforted to know that you have company in your misery; but it is a poor consolation. Your knapsack is evidently *growing* both in size and weight. It felt heavy before; now it weighs on you like a thousand of brick. You cease to wonder at the breadth and thickness of the straps which support it,—any thing less strong would snap with the tension of such a weight. You

haven't been in the habit thus far, of considering it a desirable thing to be detailed for guard duty; but you now find yourself looking off at the sentries pacing to and fro with only their muskets to carry, and you wish you were on guard to-day And now you are conscious of a sharp pain in the hollow of your right arm, from holding your musket at the shoulder for three-quarters of an hour. Why can't they let us order arms for five minutes? But instead comes the order to wheel into platoons, and around the grounds we are marched for a weary hour. We don't march good. We don't "right dress" and "left dress" good, we don't "wheel" good, and we don't *feel* good; but somehow or other we get through with it—though a few of the weaker or ailing ones drop out of the ranks—and we are still alive when marched to quarters and allowed to break ranks. It feels better now that it is done aching; but there are some of us who express the deliberate opinion, that with all the need of drill and toughening for our work, two hours of knapsack drill on a hot afternoon, was a pretty steep dose for raw recruits, the very first time. We shall all learn to like it in time, doubtless; but like olives,

tobacco and some other luxuries, one must get accustomed to it to really enjoy it.

At the close of dress parade yesterday afternoon, we were drawn up in hollow square, and a presentation of a handsome sword to Col. Blunt, by the commissioned officers of the regiment, took place. The presentation speech was made by Chaplain Brastow, and was, I am told (we could not hear it) a very appropriate one. Col. Blunt responded in fitting terms. The sword is a beautiful one, of Ames' make, with two scabbards, one for field service, and the other richly gilt and chased. After this, a presentation of a pair of shoulder straps to Major Kingsley, by the Rutland Light Guard, his former company, took place.

We are to be mustered into the U. S. service, reviewed by the Governor, and inspected in full marching equipment by Adjt. Gen. Washburn to-day It will be a busy and hard day.

There is a camp rumor that the regiment is to go to New Orleans.

October 5, 1862.

The review by Gov Holbrook and inspection yesterday, was not as tedious as we expected.

One man of our company fainted and two or three fell out before it was over; but most of the men agreed that it was on the whole an easier job than that of the day before. For one, my knapsack was sensibly less mountainous in size and weight, and my gun felt less like a six-pounder howitzer. I presume both will continue to decrease in ponderosity, as our muscles become habituated to the new pull on them.

The regiment was mustered by companies into the U. S. service, in the afternoon, by Maj. Austine, who declared, after he had administered the oath of allegiance, that he felt proud of us. One man of the Bradford company declined to take the oath, but thought better of it shortly and begged the privilege of taking it, which was granted. Another man, of the Rutland company, also declined to take the oath, and stood to his refusal. What makes his case more singular is that he served in the First regiment, throughout its term of service, and was a good soldier.

Yours, B.

IV

Off for Washington.

Washington, Oct. 10, 1862.

Dear Free Press

The camp of the Twelfth, at Brattleboro, presented a busy appearance last Tuesday morning. The thousand operations preparatory to breaking up of camp were in active progress. The quarters were full of friends of the soldiers, many of them ladies who were seated here and there and plying busy fingers in taking the last stitches for their brothers and friends, before bidding them a final good bye. The men were generally in good spirits, and anxious to be off. By eleven o'clock every knapsack was packed and the regiment in line, and at half-past eleven—the time set, to a minute—it marched from Camp Lincoln.

The day was a very hot one, and the sun blazed down with midsummer power. The Thirteenth, Col. Randall, escorted the Twelfth to the railroad station. Col. Stoughton, commanding the post, took the head of the column, and in order to show the regiment to some of his Brattleboro friends, took it by a circuitous route through the streets to the station. The march of two miles in the hot

sun was a pretty hard one for the boys; but in the little party of stragglers, perhaps twenty in all, who fell out on the way and brought up the rear, there was not a man of the Howard Guard. Through some misunderstanding or neglect on the part of the railroad companies, though the day and hour of our departure had been set for nearly a week, no cars were in readiness, and we had to wait until they were brought from below. The regiment was accordingly marched half a mile down the river to a shaded meadow and allowed to lie off for the remainder of the day A barrel of good things, sent from Burlington by Mr. Beach, supplied our company with all they could eat and some to spare to the rest, and the afternoon passed comfortably away At six o'clock, a train of empty cars arrived, and the work of embarkation commenced at seven. The cars were too few in number, however, and some freight cars had to be rigged with seats manufactured on the spot. I believe our officers considered themselves fortunate in not having to wait until cars and all were manufactured for the occasion. It was ten o'clock before we were fairly under way Before this, our kind friends who had come to Brattleboro to

see us off, had taken their leave, and the actual departure was as quiet as that of any train of thirty loaded cars could be.

The delay in getting away was a fortunate thing for the men. Had they been packed into the cars as they came heated from the march, and compelled to ride all the remainder of that hot day, they would have suffered. As it was, they lay around in the shade during the afternoon and took the rail in the cool moonlight. The night was a splendid one, and the ride down the beautiful valley of the Connecticut, which seemed doubly beautiful in the liquid moon-light, was a notable one for every man who had a particle of sentiment in his soul.

At Springfield, Mass., where we arrived about one o'clock, we were received with a salute of fifty guns. On the supposition that we should arrive about supper time, preparations had also been made to supply refreshment to the troops; but the delay upset the kind arrangement. We made little stop there or any where, but swept on down the river. We reached New Haven at 5 o'clock, A. M., spent an hour in changing the men and the baggage from the cars to the "large and splendid" steamer *Continental*, and were off

for New York. The boat barely touched at Peck Slip, and then went on to Jersey City, where we debarked about noon. Col. Howe* had provided soup and bread, which was served promptly, and we were off again by rail for Washington.

I can give little time and space to the thousand times told story of the passage of a regiment from New York to Washington. We had the customary wavings of handkerchiefs and flags, all along the way, and the usual—and it is all the more praise-worthy because it *is* usual—substantial welcome, in the shape of hot coffee, good bread and butter, and other substantials, served by the kind hands of the ladies and gentlemen of the Union Relief Association, in Philadelphia. Up to our arrival at Baltimore we made steady and reasonably rapid progress, reaching there at six o'clock Thursday morning. Then came a march of a mile and a half across the city, and six hours of tedious standing with stacked arms, near the Washington depot, varied by breakfast at the Relief Rooms. Then we were stowed away in freight cars and started out of the city The train took 600 other troops besides our regiment, and numbered thirty-four heavily loaded cars, the

* The State Agent of Vermont at New York.

men covering the tops of the cars as well as filling them inside. We made slow progress, waiting three or four hours at Annapolis Junction, and reached Washington at 9 o'clock Thursday night. Supper was given us in the not sweet or savory halls of the "Soldiers' Rest," near the Capitol, and in the huge white-washed barns attached thereto, the boys finally laid themselves down to sleep as best they might, on the hard floors, many preferring to take their blankets and sleep on the ground outside. To-day we are to go into camp somewhere about Washington.

The behavior of the regiment throughout the whole journey, elicited expressions of surprise and praise from the railroad and steamboat men and the citizens of every place at which we stopped. One of the managers of the Relief Association at Philadelphia said to me: "We have a good many regiments through here—*thirteen* this week, and on an average two regiments a day, now-a-days —and I think I have never seen a regiment of a thousand such *universally* well-behaved, orderly and gentlemanly men."

I must close this hurried letter. Our company is all here to a man, and all are well.

Yours, B.

V

In Camp at the Capitol.

Camp on E. Capitol Hill,
Washington, Oct. 12, 1862.

Dear Free Press :

The Twelfth left its temporary quarters at the Soldiers' Rest, on Friday at 11 o'clock, and moved to our present camp, something over a mile to the east of the Capitol. It is upon the wide, high, level plain called Capitol Hill. To the south of us, but hidden from our sight, runs the Eastern Branch of the Potomac, and across it are the Virginia heights, with four or five forts crowning the more prominent elevations. The ground on which we are encamped has but two or three trees in a square mile, and having been the site of numerous camps, is not overstocked with grass. Some of the men looked a little blank as they saw the bare, cheerless surface of Virginia clay on which they were to pitch their tents, and some blanker yet when they took in the length and breadth of the little strips of canvas which were to be our only shelter from sun and storm. The "shelter tent" is a couple of strips of

light cotton duck, about five feet long and four feet wide, which button together at the top or ridgepole of the concern, is pitched by straining it over the muzzles of a couple of muskets set upright, and so forms a little shelter, with both ends open, under which two men may huddle and sleep at night. A short man can be fairly covered by it; a man of ordinary height must draw up his feet or let them stick outside. We got our little tents pitched by dark, and officers and men were by that time hungry enough to enjoy their supper of three hard army biscuit apiece, —there was no fuel to cook anything with, and our cooked rations had spoiled on the journey—and tired enough to drop off quickly to sleep, with but their blanket between them and the ground. Most of us, however, were waked at midnight by the rain driving into our little tabernacles. My bedfellow turned out and hung rubber blankets so as to keep out the most of it from us, and we dropped to sleep again, to sleep soundly till morning.

These are mere trifles of a soldier's every-day life; but they are what many of your readers, who wish to know just how their boys are living while away, want to know about, and so I put them on paper.

Next day our colonel and quartermaster got the strings of red tape which hang around the various departments of supply, thoroughly pulled, and by two o'clock a train of a dozen army wagons came filing into camp with fuel, rations of good bread, beef, pork and potatoes, forage, and, last but not least, A tents. These were quickly made to take the place of the little shelters, and were viewed with intense satisfaction by the men. They are not the biggest things in the world—are in fact the simplest form of tent proper, wedge shaped and holding six men apiece lying closely side by side; but they are *tents*, and can be closed against the weather. When we take the field, we must take the others again.

We shall now begin the work of active drill, and will soon, I trust, be in fighting order.

We have already been visited by many of our friends of other regiments—by Quartermaster Dewey, Capt. Erhardt, Sergeant Morse and others of the First Vt. Cavalry, whose camp is across the river; by several from the Eleventh Vt., which is in camp about four miles away; by Lieut. Carey, of the 13th Mass., which fine regiment, once of 1100 men, has now 700 in hospital, sick and wounded, and is reduced by losses (in battle

mainly) to 191 effective men; by Lieut. "Willie" Root, of the 22d Conn., which was in camp close by us yesterday, but to-day has struck tents and moved away to Chain Bridge; and by others, whose brown and hearty faces it was pleasant to see.

We begin to realize that we are a part of the big army of the Republic—and that a single regiment is but a little part of it. Camps surround us on every side. Six thousand men, they say, came into Washington the day we did, and some come every day They come, encamp, and disappear, the rest know not whither. Our thousand is but one of a hundred thousand, and its best blood,—which will be given as freely as water, if need be—will be but a drop in the red tide which the demon of rebellion causes to flow.

What can be done for any regiment our colonel will do for this. The men already feel attached to him—and the sentiment will strengthen, I think, as they know more of him. He will be well seconded by his field and staff; and if the Twelfth does no service it will not be the fault of its officers, as I believe. We are to be temporarily brigaded, in our present camp, with the 25th and 27th New Jersey.

Yours, B.

VI.

CAMP CASEY, EAST CAPITOL HILL,
WASHINGTON, Oct. 14, 1862.

Dear Free Press:

The health of the Twelfth is on the whole good. Some twenty-five members of the regiment are suffering from minor ailments, brought on in most cases by exposure on guard duty or sleeping in damp clothes; but with a spell of fair weather —thus far it has been rather cool, damp and variable—they will soon be on duty again. There has been but one case of a dangerous character, which terminated fatally last night.

We are giving strict attention nowadays to company and battalion drill, and shall soon be able to make a presentable appearance.

The Thirteenth regiment, Col. Randall, arrived yesterday afternoon, after a comfortable passage from Brattleboro, and has gone into camp to-day about half a mile west of us. It is to be brigaded with us and the 25th and 27th New Jersey, under command of Col. Derrom of the 25th New Jersey We are for the present attached to Gen. Casey's Division of the Reserved Army Corps for the Defence of Washington, and it is the general

impression among the men that we may remain here for some weeks.

Of Col. Derrom I know nothing except that I am told he is a German by birth, and an old soldier. In his first order of duties for the regiment, "Evening prayer at 8 P M." has a place, week days, and he omits the inspections on Sunday which in many brigades make Sunday the most laborious day of the week. Our Sunday order, at present, is as follows: "Church call, morning, at 10.30 A. M. Divine service (voluntary) 11 A. M. Church call, afternoon, 3.30 P M. Divine service, (positive) 4 P M. All drills and parades except church and dress parade are omitted on Sunday "

Our chaplain returned to us to-day after an absence of four days, having been under rebel rule at Chambersburg in the meanwhile. He left us at Baltimore to accompany a Vermont lady on her way to her brother, an officer in the Third Vt. who was lying at the point of death at Hagerstown; and was returning by the way of Chambersburg when the rebels* occupied the town. He thinks there were about 1500 of them. They were well mounted, and well clothed as far

*Under Gen. J. E. B. Stuart.

as their captured U. S. clothing went—the men under strict discipline and perfect control of the officers, who conducted themselves for the most part in a very gentlemanly way. Private persons and property were strictly respected. They left in a great hurry, amounting almost to a panic.

The chaplain being with us, the order for evening prayer was observed this evening. The regiment was massed in the dim twilight, and Mr. Brastow offered an earnest and appropriate prayer.

An order read at dress parade to-night, directs the captains to hold their companies in readiness to march at a moment's notice. Forty rounds of ammunition apiece have been distributed to-day

I find soldiering no lazy business, thus far, and have literally no time to write a longer letter to-day Yours, B.

VII.

Reviews and Battalion Drill.

Camp Casey, East Capitol Hill,
Washington, Oct. 18, 1862.

Dear Free Press :

Reviews have been the order of the day with us for three or four days past. On Wednesday,

the four regiments temporarily composing this brigade, viz. the 12th and 13th Vermont, and the 25th and 27th New Jersey, were reviewed by Colonel Derrom, colonel commanding. The men were ordered out in "full marching order," which means with knapsacks packed, haversacks and canteens slung, forty rounds of ammunition in the cartridge box, and arms and equipments all complete. We were in harness about two hours and a half; but the day was cool and it did not come hard on us. The good appearance and behavior of the troops brought out the following general order:

"HEADQUARTERS SECOND BRIGADE,
CASEY'S DIVISION,
CAMP CASEY, CAPITOL HILL,
WASHINGTON, Oct. 16, 1862.

GENERAL ORDER NO. 5.

The colonel commanding this brigade, takes pleasure in giving credit to the several regiments of this brigade, for their smart appearance and general good order on review yesterday. The States they represent, as well as our common country, may be proud of them. The material is excellent, indeed cannot be surpassed, and it rests now with the officers of the brigade, whether this material shall be properly moulded or not. To do this, requires much devotion to duty, and a

strict attention to the rules and regulations of the United States army, which will be their pride; and it is hoped the officers will be examples of neatness, good order and military efficiency to the men.

A true soldier is the most courteous of men—obedient, firm, systematic, temperate and orderly, trusting in God at all times and in all places. Soldiers! aim each to be this perfect soldier.

By order of
A. DERROM,
Colonel Commanding."

Next day the brigade was reviewed by General Casey This time I was not in the ranks but detailed on special duty, and so had an opportunity to see the display To the four regiments above named was added the 14th Massachusetts battery of light artillery, six pieces. As I looked down the long line of bayonets, half a mile or more in length, it looked to me like an array of 10,000 men, and I began to have some conception how grand a display a parade of fifty or sixty thousand men must be. Of course I watched closely the marching and appearance of the different regiments, and was proud to find the 12th Vermont, though the newest regiment on the ground the 13th Vermont excepted, second to no other present. This I am sure was not

partiality on my part. I *tried* certainly to be perfectly fair in my judgment, and if I found that we were inferior in drill to the New Jersey regiments, as we might naturally be expected to be, having been in camp days to their weeks, I meant to own it. But it was not so. Our officers were the most spirited in appearance, our men the quickest into line, the most uniform in marching, the most elastic in their step, the promptest in the simple evolutions ordered. And this was also the opinion of far better judges than myself, General Casey having freely expressed his surprise at such proficiency in so new a regiment, and having transmitted to Col. Blunt a written expression of his gratification with our appearance, which was read to us, with the added thanks of the colonel, at dress parade next evening. While we were out on review, the Inspector of Camps, of Gen. Casey's division, inspected the camps and put a new feather in our cap, by declaring that he was glad at last to find in that of the Twelfth, a camp to which he might point other regiments, as an example of order and neatness.

Yesterday was given to battalion drill, and to-day we have had another grand review, by Gens. Banks and Casey, of the troops of the two

provisional brigades of Gen. Casey's division. These, when the order for review was issued, comprised eight regiments of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Vermont troops, with two batteries, but a sudden order called two of them to the field last night, and but six regiments with the two batteries were on the ground. I wish I had the time to fully describe this review; but I must make it short.

The day was bright and again the Twelfth won high praise. The Fifteenth Connecticut surpassed us a little in marching; but then the Connecticut regiment has been three months in camp, is a particularly good regiment, and its company lines were not over two-thirds the length of ours—an important consideration in marching and wheeling.

We are as proud of our field officers as they are of the men. Col. Blunt always attracts attention by his keen eye, lithe figure, and fine horsemanship. He rides a large dark bay horse, of English blood and training, presented to him by Thaddeus Fairbanks of St. Johnsbury Our lieutenant colonel, Farnham, with nothing of show in his composition—for he is a very quiet as well as efficient officer—is handsome in face and

figure, and the beautiful and fiery bay horse which he rides is much admired. Major Kingsley also rides a handsome bay Our Adjutant rides a jet black Morgan stallion. Col. Randall of the Thirteenth, rides a splendid chestnut charger; and it was agreed that there were no better looking officers on the ground, from Major Gen. Banks down, than the Vermont officers, or better horses than the Vermont horses.

The troops, after review, were marched down to the city, through Pennsylvania Avenue to Gen. Casey's headquarters near Long Bridge, and then back to camp, making in all a march of six miles or more. The boys stood it well. They are getting toughened pretty rapidly, although many suffer from diarrhœa and colds. The list of sick men in hospital, however, does not average over twenty, none of them being very sick.

I find on looking over such of my letters as have returned to me in the *Free Press*, that I have omitted many things of interest to us here, and perhaps, to our friends at home. The advent of our mule teams is one. I ought to remember that, I am sure, for I travelled many a footsore mile, accompanying the officer who was sent to obtain them, over the pavements of Washington,

ADJT. VAUGHN. SURG. CONN. Q. M. BROWNSON.

LT.-COL. FARNHAM. COL. BLUNT. MAJ. KINGSLEY.

FIELD AND STAFF OFFICERS, 12TH VERMONT VOLS.

from one army office to another, before we secured them. We have five teams of four mules each. The driver rides one of the wheel mules, and drives by a rein attached to the head of one of the leaders. They were but half broken when we took them, and do not understand English at all. There is no such word as "*whoa*" in the negro dialect, the monosyllable "*yay*" taking its place,—and the mules do not always mind that. Their yay is not yea nor their neigh a neigh proper, by any means. The scene was a rich one, when our boys took them up Pennsylvania Avenue, the first day, on their way to camp. They cleared one side of the broad street as effectively as a charge of cavalry, and came within one of riding over one of the street railroad cars, horses, passengers and all. But I cannot tell every thing. If I jot down hastily now and then a circumstance or scene of interest, it is the most I can do.

Yours, B.

VIII.

The Army Hospitals—A Washington Dust-Storm.

Camp Casey, East Capitol Hill,
Washington, Oct. 23, 1862.

Dear Free Press:

The health of a regiment is apt to be a matter of considerable interest to its members and to their friends. The health of the Twelfth may, I suppose, be called pretty good. The longest sick list, as yet, has been thirty-two privates and six officers. Only two or three of these can be called very sick. Some are merely home-sick, while on the other hand, there are to be added, in making a complete account a number suffering from ailments not severe enough to figure in the regimental reports. The men, as a general thing, have a repugnance to going into hospital. The hospital is a large tent, kept warm by stoves, in which the sick men lie on straw, placed on the ground, as the Government does not furnish cots. It *looks* a little hard; but ours is a good field hospital, and the inmates are better off than many in and around this city. The sick and wounded men in the permanent hospitals in Washington,

Georgetown and Alexandria, number *thirty-four thousand*—an army in themselves. Many of these are in tents, for want of houses, and many, I fear, from what I hear, suffer from want of suitable care. The Government is now building on the plain here, not far from our camp, some immense one-story wooden buildings, for a general hospital, which, when completed, will give the covering of a roof to thousands who now shiver in the hospital tents.

To return to our own regiment and company,—our hospital steward, Mr. Hard, is a kind, skillful and faithful man; the hospital orderly, Wm. B. Lund, of Company C, is also a trusty and excellent man; the chaplain interests himself heartily in the sick men. So far as they can secure it, all our sick will have kind and suitable care. I do not speak of the surgeons. Dr. Conn, the assistant surgeon, has been sick, himself, with a fever, ever since our arrival. He is improving. None of our Burlington boys have been seriously ill, thus far, with the exception of W W Walker, who has a combined attack of fever and ague and dysentery,—and but one of our company (Collamer) can be called dangerously sick. He was suffering terribly with dysentery and vomiting

yesterday To-day he has been removed by Capt. Page to a comfortable private boarding-house in the city, and one of our best men left in charge of him.

On many, probably on the majority of the men, the out-door life and abundance of exercise have a very favorable effect. They eat heartily, sleep soundly, enjoy themselves pretty well, and grow fat. Most of them, however, have worn out, thus soon, the romance of soldiering, and are ready to own that the life of a private soldier is a rather rough one. There are some discomforts about tent-life on East Capitol Hill, it must be owned. What do you think of a bath of thirty-six hours' duration in Washington *dirt?* That is what we have been enjoying yesterday and to-day It had been quite dusty for a day or two and you must remember that we are on a bare surface of clay, denuded of grass and easily ground into the finest, most adhesive and most disagreeable dust in the world—the dust of Washington. It had sifted pretty thoroughly over and into every thing in our tents, when yesterday morning the wind began to blow. It commenced before light with a furious gust, which woke our thousand sleepers, and many other thousands around us, to find the

dust pouring in upon us through every opening and crevice. We sprang up and with blankets and over-coats closed the openings; but the dust was still there, kept in constant motion by the slatting of our canvas walls, and the only way was to lie down again and take it as it came. What a dirty crew crawled out of the tents that morning! It was of little use to brush or wash —which latter habit, by the way, has to be indulged with moderation in our camp, for we are short of water. There is water in the Potomac, and in some wells around us, but these latter are drawn on constantly by other regiments as well as our own. The one nearest us, on which we relied almost entirely, has given out; and having to be brought a considerable distance, water is now a luxury if not a rarity, in the camp of the Twelfth. The wind kept up and the dust with it, and it is not fairly down yet. It is a peculiar life, when you must eat, breathe and drink earth, instead of food, air and water. You open your mouth,it is as if some one had put in a spoonful of pulverized clay You put your hand to your hair, it feels like a dust brush. You touch your cheek, it is a clod. You place your finger in your ear, it is like running it into a hole

in the ground. You draw from one of the dust holes in your clothes, the mud-stained rag which a few hours since was your clean handkerchief, and wipe a small pile of "sacred soil" from the corner of either eye. You look on the faces of your comrades, they are of the earth, earthy. The dust penetrates every fibre of every article of clothing; you feel dirty clear through. But it is of no use to attempt to describe it; it is unutterable—this plague of dust. It has not prevented, however, the company and battalion drills, and a brigade drill, by General Casey, of this brigade and the Eleventh Massachusetts Battery attached to it, came off to-day It was emphatically a dusty affair.

There are frequent movements of regiments about us. More come than go. The twenty-fifth and Twenty-seventh Maine, and the Fourteenth New Hampshire, have arrived within a day or two, and are encamped close to us. The latter is under marching orders, however, and will be off to-morrow Two or three of the neighboring regiments have fine brass bands, and so we have good music around us on some of the clear mornings. There is talk of organizing a band for the Twelfth from the musical talent in the ranks. Our drum major,

Perley Downer, has been made brigade drum major of this provisional brigade. Company C, received him, after dress parade last evening when the order for his promotion was received, with presented arms and three cheers, to which Major Downer responded in a characteristic little speech.

October 25.

The dust storm is over. The frost lies this morning thick and white on the ground—the first one of the season here. The sick are all doing well, except Captain Savage of Company A, who has been delirious and ran out of camp in his shirt and drawers last evening. He was found after a while in the barracks of a neighboring regiment.

October 26.

We had a regular *soaker* to-day—hard rain all day; tents soaked through; camp ground swimming; mud from five to fifteen inches deep; nothing done but to keep the water out and eat our meals. It is raining harder than ever since dark. I have just been out and made a raise of a couple of shelter tents, which we have thrown over our tent and hope thus to keep the water from drip-

ping on us. The ground is soaked so that the tent pins have but a slight hold and a gust of wind would bring down half the tents in the regment.

The Fourteenth regiment was sent up to Chain Bridge night before last, which shows that the Vermont regiments are not to be brigaded together at present.

I think, from what I hear to-night, that we are likely to remain here a while longer; but all is uncertainty as to army movements.

Yours, B.

IX.

Organization of the Second Vermont Brigade.

Camp Casey, East Capitol Hill,
Washington, Oct. 28, 1862.

Dear Free Press:

All the Vermont regiments are now here, the Sixteenth having arrived yesterday As the Fourteenth and Fifteenth were sent across the Potomac on their arrival, we had about given up the expectation that the new Vermont regiments would be brigaded together. But last night an

order came, brigading them together. The New Jersey regiments with which we have been brigaded are on the march to-day, and the Vermont regiments which were sent across the river will come back and be posted near us. The Sixteenth went into camp right over against us last night. They slept under the little shelter tents—if sleep they could, for it was a very cold night, the ground damp and covered with white frost this morning. They would have had a rather poor look, too, if left to themselves, for something to eat, but they were not allowed to go hungry. The Thirteenth regiment had them to supper last night and the Twelfth invited them to breakfast this morning. Each company entertained the company of the corresponding letter, and Company C of the Sixteenth, who were the guests of the Howard Guard, got a first-rate breakfast and acknowledged our hospitality before they filed away, with three hearty cheers for the Twelfth. The men of the Sixteenth are a fine, hearty looking set of men, and behaved like gentlemen, as they are.

The brigading of these Vermont regiments is particularly satisfactory to us, and we of the Twelfth were also gratified that command of the

brigade should fall to our colonel. Company C first got the news, just after dark last evening, and turning out, they filed down to the colonel's tent, led by Captain Page, and gave three cheers for the Second Vermont brigade, and Colonel Blunt commanding. This called out the colonel who made one of the little speeches which he makes so happily, stopping when he gets through. He congratulated the men on the brigading of these five fine Vermont regiments, which, he felt sure would fight side by side like true comrades. He explained that the command fell to him by virtue of his rank as senior colonel; that it was merely temporary and could last only till a brigadier general should be placed over us, as he trusted a good one soon would be. "We have hitherto, my boys," he said, "seen but the pleasantest part of a soldier's life. Thus far we have known little of trial and suffering, and nothing of danger. The rough times are yet to come. When they come we must meet them like men, each doing the very best he knows how to do, for the cause of the country, for the honor of our State, and for the credit of the Twelfth, and looking to God to grant us success."

Other companies came up in succession,

each to cheer the colonel and call him out for a speech, the drum corps winding up the series with a salute and Yankee Doodle. On the whole, it was quite a little time, for an impromptu one.

I wrote of *dust* the other day We have had a touch of a different kind of storm since. Day before yesterday our first steady rain set in. All the orders for the day with the exception of guard-mounting and calls to meals, had the go-by, and the men kept closely within their tents. At nightfall the air grew colder, the wind higher, and the rain heavier. Our tents, which are not new, had hitherto kept out the rain pretty well, but did not prove impervious to the big drops driven by the storm. They came right through the canvas, spattering in our faces, covering our blankets with a heavy dew, and running down the inside of the tent in streams.

Things began to have a decidedly damp look for the privates. There is considerable virtue, however, in good woolen and India rubber blankets; and most of us succeeded in cuddling on and under them, in some shape, so as to get some sleep without dreaming of Noah's flood. About four o'clock in the morning it stopped raining and began to pour down in sheets. Our company

streets became rivers; the water in parts of the camp overran the trenches around the tents, and poured in upon the inmates. The ground, soaked to mud, ceased to hold the tent pins, and many a luckless soldier had to turn out in the storm and drive his stakes anew It was a juicy time all around. But daylight came, at last, with much apparent difficulty, and the question of *breakfast* began to stare us in the face. We were cold, wet and hungry The storm had filled the kitchen trenches with water, instead of fire. There was no chance for anything hot; should we have anything but rain-soaked bread? Some companies did not. The good cooks of Company C, however, had been equal to the emergency, had kept their fires burning while there was any possibility of so doing, and had provided in the night against the contingencies of the morning. We had a good breakfast of bread, beef and pork, and, thus fortified within, possessed our souls in patience till the storm broke away about 9 o'clock. It was a hard storm, even for this locality, and left a pond of many acres where our parade ground has been heretofore. The day came off clear and cold, and before night the blankets were sufficiently dried to sleep comfort-

ably in. Another wet night would probably have added considerably to the length of our sick list; as it was but a few over the average were reported.

Yours, B.

X.

Ordered to the Field.

Camp of the Second Vermont Brigade,
Near Munson's Hill,
Virginia, Oct. 30, 1862.

Dear Free Press:

"Change sweepeth over all," sang the plaintive Motherwell, and we find the line to have as much truth as poetry in the army. Yesterday at this time every man in the Second Vermont brigade thought we were good for a stay of some weeks on East Capitol Hill. The Vermont regiments had been brigaded together. The Fourteenth and Fifteenth, ordered across the Potomac on their arrival, had been ordered back and were establishing themselves in camp near us. It was reasonable to suppose that some time for drill in battalion and brigade evolutions would be granted before sending us forward. All the other troops about us had been ordered away, leaving our

brigade alone on East Capitol Hill. *Some* troops would of course be left there, and we must be the ones. So reasoned officers and men, and the conclusion was easily reached that we should stay where we were for the present. In this conviction the men of the Twelfth began making themselves more comfortable in camp. Lumber was procured at $25 a thousand and upwards. Our little A tents, in which we enacted the daily and nightly miracle of stowing six men, with six muskets and about as much harness as is allotted to so many horses in a well arranged stable, together with bedding, crockery and tinware and goods and chattels all and sundry, belonging to said family of six, in a tent seven feet square on the ground and tapering in a wedge to the height of six or six and one-half feet,—these little tents were elevated on sides built up of boards, by which their original capacity was almost doubled and the comfort of the occupants at least trebled. Shelves were rigged, pegs put in to hang guns and trappings on, floors laid, and various little contrivances to enhance order and cleanliness added. With what satisfaction we looked at our new structures! How we enjoyed a residence in which we could stretch our arms at length above

our heads, and sit around the sides without doubling together like so many jack-knives! With what complacency did we think of our own thrift, and look forward to days and weeks of such comparative luxury! Alas for the folly of human expectations! With nightfall came the order to move into Virginia, and here we are to-night, five miles the other side of the Potomac, our new acquisitions left far behind us, and not a saw-mill or lumber yard this side of Washington or Richmond, so far as we know. They may talk of the sorrow of leaving the ancestral roof-tree, the hearth around which boyhood's days were spent and youth's and manhood's memories clustered; —that can be described; but the pangs with which we left our wooden walls and floors, are indescribable. But such is life in the army. We have, however, some consolation; our kind colonel and quartermaster have promised that if the wagons can be procured to transport it, our lumber shall follow us hither.

The five Vermont regiments broke camp at daybreak this morning. The order was to form line at half past seven and march at eight. Col. Blunt, commanding, is a prompt man. At half past seven the line was formed, and at eight the

column marched. It swept down Pennsylvania Avenue, as goodly an array of five thousand stout, intelligent, spirited men as eye ever looked on. The march was a very comfortable one for the men, and our present camp bids fair to be a great improvement on our late one, as far as the ground and nearness to wood and water are concerned.

You have heard before this of the death of young Collamer of Shelburne. It is the first gap made by death in the ranks of Company C, and we feel it keenly He was an amiable and excellent young man, with the making in him, to all appearance, of a stout and hearty soldier. His disease was uncontrollable. For a day or two the doctors thought he might rally, but he did not agree with them. "I shall die in three days," he said, one night, and in three days he died, peacefully, even happily, for he had made his peace with God.

There are no very sick men of our Company; and I believe we shall find our present camp, on new ground not tainted by the stay upon it of so many successive thousands, a healthier one than the old one. How long we shall stay here no one can say

Yours, B.

XI.

A Little farther Toward the Front.

Picket Station No. 35, Union Lines,
Mount Pleasant, Fairfax Co., Va.,
November 3d, 1862.

Dear Free Press

The Twelfth is making some progress. We are on "the Richmond road," from Alexandria, Va., to the South, which is one of several roads to Richmond.

Camp Seward, the first camping ground of this brigade on the soil of the "Mother of Presidents," from which I wrote last, was on the edge of a clean stretch of oak timber near the famous "Munson's Hill." A few rods in the rear ran a stream of clear, sweet water. Here was a mat of furzy grass between us and the everlasting clay; here was shade in the heat of the day—the midday sun is hot here, yet;—here was *wood*—wood to burn if we wished a fire; forked sticks for toasting-forks and clothes-horses and gun-racks, to be had for the cutting;—wood to whittle, when one had time to indulge in that Yankee pastime. How different from that stretch of desert on East Capitol Hill where not a sliver for a

tooth pick could be had at less than $25 a thousand feet, and water only came through much tribulation and by the pailful for a company It was a right pleasant spot, and we began at once to be comfortable. The lumber on which to raise the tents for some of the boys, had followed us, and was put at once to its proper use. Others split out flat shooks and made them answer in place of boards. Others stockaded their tents with small logs, filling the cracks with fringes of cedar. The five regiments were stretched along side by side, and the camps hummed with activity The woods were filled with men apparently on a big pic-nic. It lasted just *one* day ! Orders came for a grand review on the parade ground of Fort Albany, near by us, on Saturday morning. The regiments marched out to it at 10 o'clock, only to be turned back by orders for two regiments to strike tents and march at once, we knew not whither. At half past twelve the Twelfth and Thirteenth started for Alexandria, Colonel Randall commanding in the temporary absence of Colonel Blunt, and the Thirteenth leading. Our A tents we left behind us and we carried shelter tents on our knapsacks, each man his half. Colonel Randall had ridden ahead, and our gait for the first two

miles was set by an inexperienced officer of the Thirteenth, who forgot that men with heavy knapsacks could not march at the pace of his fast walking roadster, without feeling it.

It was a very hot day The men sprang to it, at a smart walk for the long legged ones and on the keen jump for the short men. We passed some squads of old troops. "Where is the fight, boys?" was the first question. "There must be one," they added,—"men are not marched like that unless they are wanted in a *mighty* hurry" We got a rest in time to save a third of the two regiments from falling out; but the men had got blown at the outset and it made the whole march a pretty hard one. Near Alexandria we passed the camps of the paroled men and convalescents, which line the road. They came out by hundreds to see us go by, and laughed at our well stuffed knapsacks. "'You're green," they said, "You'll heave them away before you march many more marches. Then you'll see where you missed it." "We see where *you* missed it," replied Dick Erwin, the funny man of our company, whose supply of "chaff" is inexhaustible,—"it was when you hove away that *soap and towels* so soon." This hit at the unwashed

appearance of the first spokesman and his crowd, brought a roar of laughter from three hundred hearers, and "the uncalled for remarks" dried up suddenly After a halt in the outskirts of the city, we passed across Hunting Creek, and after a march of about ten miles, we were glad to halt, pitch our shelter tents in a hurry, eat the rations in our haversacks, and drop off to sleep. We discovered first, however, that we were to picket a space of six miles in the Union lines around Washington, left unguarded by the marching of Sickles' brigade, which with many thousand other troops, left the day before to reinforce Sigel. Two companies of the Thirteenth were at once sent off on that duty

After dinner on Sunday, Nov. 2d, we marched south on the Mt. Vernon road about a mile and a half to our present camp; and within fifteen minutes after our arrival four companies were detailed for picket duty Company C was of the number and your correspondent found it, as it has often been said to be, the pleasantest part of soldiering. We were marched off rapidly two or three miles farther into the country to the brow of the high ground which looks off on the valley of the Potomac, stretching many a mile to the south, in a

varied scene of meadow and timber, now glowing with the bright colors of the American autumn, and far away to the west to the lands on the Accotink. The line of picket stations we were to man extended three miles in each direction, reaching to the Potomac on the extreme left. Two companies were taken to the right and companies C and D waited till the officer, an aid of General Casey, who was to station us, returned. As we waited we heard the first sound of actual conflict. From the north-west came, distinct and unmistakable, the sound of cannon from the distant battlefield,* of which you, no doubt, have the news, though as yet we have but uncertain rumors of it. For an hour and a half the booming was incessant. It mostly died away, however, before we started out upon the line. We were hurried along just at nightfall, leaving now one, now two, now three, now a reserve of ten or fifteen men, at the posts. A dilapidated log hut, a booth of boughs or the shade of a big oak, gave shelter, and fires of brush or rails were burning at each. For twenty-four hours we were to stand guard here. My own station, where I am writ-

* Engagement of McClellan's advance with confederate cavalry and infantry, at Snicker's Gap, November 2d, 1862.

ing, is on the estate of Mt. Pleasant, in front of the residence of Mrs. W——, its owner. From the brow of the high, level plateau I have before me a view of unusual interest and beauty Away below winds the Potomac through a magnificent valley, woodland and meadow varying the prospect and evergreens relieving the bright coloring of the oak forest. Directly in front lies Mt. Vernon, the house hidden by an interposing ridge; but the estate plainly in view. To the left is Fort Washington, built in 1812 and now occupied by Union forces. Mansions of once wealthy "first families" are visible between the trees, here and there. It is a magnificent view. I had four hours of watch, from 11 to 3. It was a mild night, sometimes a little clouded, anon the full moon bringing out the prospect almost as by daylight. Four or five picket fires gleamed along the line; but the night was still as death. There was no sound of armies or man or beast. I can bear personal witness to the fact that all was "quiet on the Potomac."

There is nothing exciting in this duty. We know that there are no rebel forces near us; but after all, we are at the front, doing duty with loaded arms, and no armed body is between us

and the lines of the enemy. I would like to describe this old house, 150 years old, and some of the peculiar features of this scene, but the relief is now in sight to take our places, and I must march back to camp.

The health of the regiment is very good. Lieutenant William Loomis of Company C is now acting as adjutant of the Twelfth, Adjutant Vaughan being A. A. A. G.—acting assistant adjutant general—of the brigade. Two men, one in Company I, another in Company K, shot themselves accidentally with their revolvers yesterday—one through the hand, one through the ankle. Yours, B.

XII.

Camp Vermont—First Snow Storm.

Camp Vermont.
Fairfax County, Va., Nov 7, 1862.

Dear Free Press:

The camp of the Second Vermont Brigade, in this place, south of Alexandria on the Mt. Vernon road, has been christened "Vermont." And to-day it looks more like Vermont than Virginia

is wont to at this time of the year. We are enjoying a veritable snow storm. It began at 7 o'clock this morning, has fallen steadily, and now at 7 P M., at least five inches of snow lies upon the ground. Several gentlemen who spent last winter in Camp Griffin, Va., assure me that there was no such fall of snow in this region in all last winter.

The air is chill, and it will freeze sharply to-night. It is a sufficiently notable thing to be announced by telegraph, and much sympathy and concern may be expended by our Vermont friends as they read of half a foot of snow in Washington, and think of their soldier sons and brothers as shivering under canvas or standing on picket in the storm. But there is little suffering in this regiment. Not that a small tent—our tents followed us hither from Camp Seward—soaked with moisture from damp snow, is the most warm and cheerful habitation imaginable; but it can be closed tight enough to keep the snow from actual contact with its inmates, and by piling on what woolen clothing he has, in all shapes, a healthy man can keep up the warmth of his body, and by snuggling close to his comrades can sleep with some approach to comfort.

But our Vermont boys are not restricted in all cases to the means and appliances for comfort furnished them by Uncle Sam, and are, I find, apt to be equal to most emergencies. They are to this, at any rate. A couple of our old soldiers, formerly of the First regiment, set us the pattern of a tent stove, two or three days since. A piece of sheet iron, a foot or two square, bent as to the edges so as to form a shallow pan, was inverted over a hole in the ground of corresponding size; a tube of bent sheet iron, leading from the outer air to the bottom of the hole provides air, and a joint or two of rusty stove pipe, eked out with one or two topless and bottomless tin cans, makes a chimney which draws like a blister plaster. It don't look much like a stove; I can't say exactly what it *does* look like—as near as anything, perhaps, like the very young offspring of a cross between the Monitor and a Dutch oven; but it answers the purpose. Its chimney, smoking furiously this morning amid the flying snow flakes, gave the hint to our boys, and half of Company C were off at once for material wherewith to build similar nondescripts. They rummaged a deserted camp near us, and came back loaded with pieces of old stove pipe and scraps of cast and sheet iron,

which were quickly put together; and as I looked up our company street an hour ago, I saw the rusty pipes sticking out of the ground by the side of more than half the tents, the curling smoke from each telling of warmth and comparative comfort within.

There were some, however—the tenthold of which your humble correspondent is a member among them—who were not lucky enough to find the needful supply of old sheet iron. So we took our dinner of boiled pork, bread and coffee, in our damp tent, ate it in sour and meditative silence, and held a council of war at its close. Something had to be done; our toes and fingers and noses were cold; our straw and blankets were damp. We must have a *fire;* how to get it was something of a question. Our sole supply of metal was in our dinner furniture before us. The problem was,—given a table knife and fork, a tin cup and a tin plate, to extemporize therewith a stove, pipe and chimney But we set to work, and Mr. Ericsson himself could not have done more with the same material. With the knife and cup we excavated a hole in the firm and adhesive clay which forms the floor of our tent; at the top the hole was a little less in circumfer-

ence than our tin plate; its bottom, a foot or more below the surface, was somewhat larger. A hole was then dug outside the tent, sloping inward till it nearly met our excavation inside, and the bottoms of the two were connected by a passage two inches in diameter, worked through with the knife. From the top of our circular cavity within, a trench was made extending outside the tent, and covered by a brickbat, which turned up opportunely when most needed. The tin plate was placed over the hole, and the thing was done. You perceive the nature of the invention. This planet on which we dwell forms the body of our stove. The tin plate is both door and top of the same. The small hole at the bottom is the draught; the trench at the top is the flue. We fill it with hard wood chips, light a fire, and it works quite as well as could be expected.

The heating surface was pretty small, it is true; but we kept the old plate red hot by assiduous feeding. In an hour or two the ground around began to be sensibly warmed. A dry spot developed itself, as soon as the snow stopped falling, in the canvas of our tent over the stove, and extended slowly along the side. The temperature rose sensibly within;—and when by a fortunate

stroke of policy we were enabled to substitute a sheet iron mess pan for our dinner plate, thus quadrupling our heating surface, we had all the heat we needed. We can no longer see our breath within our linen house. We laid our bread on the top of our stove and had hot toast with our tea for supper; and the prospects are that we shall sleep warm and dry to-night.

November 8th, 1862.

So we did, though the night was a very sharp one. Our snow stands the sunshine well to-day and will not be wholly gone, I think, before to-morrow.

Nearly half the regiment is off on "fatigue duty" to-day This, it seems, is the military term for the process which is said to be McClellan's forte. In common English it is called *digging*. The defensive strength of Fort Lyon, half a mile to the north of our camp, is being increased by some formidable outworks, and fifteen hundred men from our brigade are to enjoy daily for a while the privilege of digging the trenches and throwing up the breastworks.

Orders are out, moreover, for us to build log huts for winter quarters. This looks like winter-

ing us here, though it is quite within the range of possibility, that we shall build and leave for others to occupy. There are other indications, however, which point toward a somewhat protracted stay here. If so, Camp Vermont is worth a line or two of description. The Twelfth is encamped on a sloping hillside, by a stream of good water, and in close proximity to the family mansion of the manor of "Spring Bank." Of this Mr. George Mason is the proprietor—an old gentleman who in this great contest between the Government and rebellion, announces himself as *neutral*. In token of his position he had a white flag hung out, when our regiment, without saying by your leave, marched into his grounds. A written notice, attached to a tree, informed all whom it might concern, that Mr. George Mason could accommodate no person outside of his own family in his house, and had stuck this up to save applicants the pain of a peremptory refusal. Nevertheless, I preceive that Col. Blunt has his headquarters in a wing of the mansion, and the barns are filled with the horses of the regiment. One of the old darkies of the establishment hit it about right, as one of his brother contrabands expressed astonishment at the summary exclusion

of his master's cows from their wonted stalls for the accommodation of Yankee horses: "Ole Massa might a'been nuff of a Union man to hang out de stars and stripes, den he got sarved better."

Around us, within a circuit of a quarter of a mile, are the other regiments of our brigade. There are woods close by to furnish timber and fuel, and though it is not as sheltered and pleasant a place as our last encampment, we can make ourselves comfortable here, beyond a doubt.

The Fourteenth, Fifteenth and Sixteenth regiments are to have their old French and Belgian muskets exchanged for Enfield rifles in a day or two, and will then do their share of picket duty Some of your anxious readers may have supposed, possibly, from the fact that we are doing such duty, that we are in the face of the enemy, or somewhere near it. Such is by no means the case. It is true that, with the exception of some cavalry videttes, there are no armed bodies between us and the enemy on the direct line south; but the rebel lines are twenty or thirty miles to the south and west of us, and are likely to be farther off rather than nearer. Our only danger at their hands is from a raid, and to that we should be liable, it seems, as far

north as Chambersburg, Pa., and how much farther General Stuart, C. S. A., only knows. We do not intend, however, to let that active gentleman through, about here. Our pickets have thus far brought into camp three prisoners. One was a horridly dirty and animated, externally, specimen of humanity, who turned out to be an estray from the convalescent camp at Alexandria, who had wandered beyond our lines, perhaps with the intention of deserting. The others profess to be deserters from the rebels, and have been taken for safe keeping to Fairfax Seminary.

Colonel Blunt continues in command of this brigade. Colonel E. H. Stoughton, we hear, is to be assigned to the command of a brigade in General Brooks's division of the Army of the Potomac—a high honor for a young man of twenty-two. Yours, B.

XIII.

An Ordinary Day in Camp.

Camp Vermont,
Fairfax Co., Va., Nov. 14, 1862.

Dear Free Press :

You have discovered that I make little or no mention of army movements ; nor do I indulge in

criticism or speculation in regard to the course of the war in any of its parts. Such matters I leave to the correspondents from headquarters. My object is to give your readers, so many of whom have friends in our ranks, some idea of our life and business, as seen, not from the officer's marquee or the reporter's saddle, but from the tent of the private. I have nothing to write, consequently, about the recent change in the chief command of the Army of the Potomac, or its probable results. I may say, however, that there has been no mutiny in the Second Vermont brigade in consequence of General McClellan's removal, and that any change that promises more active and efficient service for the army, will have our hearty approval, as a portion of the same.

In the absence of any thing especially exciting, let me try and describe, briefly, an ordinary day in camp. You are perhaps, familiar enough with the regular arrangement of tents in a regimental camp. The tents of the colonel and his staff are commonly disposed in a line at the rear of the camp. In a parallel line with them are the tents of the line officers, each captain's tent fronting the street of his company The company streets run at right angles to the line of the officers'

tents, and are of variable widths, in different camps, according to the extent of the ground. In our present camp they are about twenty-five feet wide. On each side are the company tents, nine on a side, facing the street on either side. At the inner end of the street, on one side, is the cook tent, occupied by the company cooks and stores, and in front of it is the "kitchen range." Whose patent this is, I cannot say. It is composed of a trench, four feet long and two deep, dug in the ground. In the bottom of this the fire is kindled. Forked sticks at the corners, support a couple of stout poles, parallel with the sides, across which are laid shorter sticks on which hang the kettles. With this apparatus, and an oblong frying pan of formidable dimensions, say three feet long by two wide, is done all the cooking of the company.

The first signs of life, inside of the lines of the main camp guard, are to be seen at these points. The cooks must be up an hour or two before light, to get their fires started and breakfast cooking. The fires on the cold mornings, and most of the mornings are cold, are objects of attraction to those of the soldiers who for any reason have lain too cold to sleep. These come shivering to

the fires, and watch the cooks and warm their shins, till reveille. There are stoves now, however, of some sort, in most of the tents, and almost all can be as warm as they wish at any time.

At daybreak the drum major marshals his drum and fife corps at the centre of the line, and the reveille, with scream of fife and roll of drum, arouses the sleeping hundreds, lying wrapped in their blankets under the canvas roofs. The reveille is a succession of five tunes, of varying time, common and quick, closing with three rolls, by the end of which each company is expected to be in line in the company street. The men tumble out for the most part just as they have slept, some with blankets wrapped about them, some in slippers and smoking caps, some in overcoats. They fall into line and the orderly sergeant calls the roll and reads the list of details for guard, police, fatigue duty, etc. After roll call, many dive back into their tents and take a morning nap before breakfast ; others start in squads for the brook which runs close by the camp, to wash. The fortunate owners of wash basins—there are two in our company—bring them out, use them, and pass them over to the numerous borrowers;

others wash in water from their canteens, one pouring on the hands of another. "Police duty" comes at 6.15, and is performed by a squad under direction of a corporal. This varies slightly from the popular notion of such duty, which is commonly supposed to consist in wearing a star and standing round on city street corners, with the occasional diversion of clubbing some non-resistant citizen. In camp "police duty" corresponds to what, when I was a boy, was called clearing up the door yard. The sweeping of the company streets, removal of unsightly objects, grading of the grounds, and work of similar character, comes under this head. At half past six comes the "surgeon's call." This is not a call made by the surgeon, who is not expected to appear in company quarters unless for some special emergency; but of the orderly sergeant, who calls for any who have been taken sick in the night, and feel bad enough to own it and be marched off to the surgeon's tent, where, after examination, they are ordered into hospital or on duty, as the case may require.

Breakfast takes place at 7, by which time, in well ordered tents, the blankets have been shaken, folded, and laid away with the knapsacks in a

neat row at the back of the tent, and the soldiers start out, cup in hand, for the cook tent, where each takes his plate with his allowance of bread and beef or pork, and fills his cup with coffee. Some sit and eat their breakfast on the wood pile near the fire; but most take their meals to their tents. The straw covered floor is the table, a rubber blanket the table cloth, and sitting round on the ground like so many tailors, we eat with an appetite which gives to the meal a zest almost unknown before we came "a sogering." Our meals do not differ greatly, the principal difference being that for dinner we have cold water instead of tea or coffee. The rations are beef, salt and fresh, three-fifths of the former to two of the latter, both of fair quality; salt pork, which has uniformly been excellent; bread, soft and hard, the former equal to first rate home-made bread, the latter in size, taste and quality resembling basswood chips—very wholesome, however, and not unpalatable; rice, beans, both good, and potatoes occasionally; coffee fair, and tea rather poor. Butter, which when good is one of the greatest luxuries in camp, cheese, apples, which with most Vermonters are almost an essential, and other knickknacks, are not furnished by govern-

ment, but may be bought of the sutlers at high prices. Our men are great hands for *toast;* and at every meal the cook-fires are surrounded with a circle of the boys holding their bread to the fire on forked sticks or wire toast racks of their own manufacture, and of wonderful size and description. So we live, and it shows to what the human frame may be inured by practice and hardship, that we can eat a meal of good baked or boiled pork and beans, potatoes, boiled rice and sugar, coffee and toast, and take it not merely to sustain life, but actually with a relish—curious, isn't it?

Dinner is at 12, dress parade at 4:30, and supper at 5:30. The heavy work of the men fills the intervals. This varies. At Capitol Hill it was company and battalion drills. Here it is digging in the trenches of Fort Lyon, and cutting lumber in the woods near by, for our winter quarters. Evenings are spent very much as they would be by most young men at home, in visiting their comrades, playing cards and checkers, writing letters, and reading. A common occupation of a leisure hour, with the smokers, is the carving of pipes from the roots of the laurel, found in profusion in the woods here. It is a slow business,

in most cases beginning with a chunk about half as large as one's head, which is reduced by slow degrees and patient whittling to the small size of a pipe bowl. Another common, but not so delightful pastime, is the washing of one's dirty clothes. Many of our men have learned to be expert washers, and that without wash-board or pounding-barrel. Those who have pocket money, however, can have their washing done by the "contraband" washerwomen, who have been on hand at every camp we have occupied.

At half-past eight P. M. the tattoo is sounded by the drum and fife corps, playing several tunes as at reveille, when each company is again drawn up in its street and the roll called. At nine comes "taps," when every light must be out in the tents, and the men turn in for their night's rest. The ground within the tents is covered with straw or cedar branches, on which are spread the rubber blankets; this is the bed, the knapsack is the pillow. There is no trouble about undressing; our blouses, or flannel fatigue coats, pantaloons and stockings, sometimes with overcoat added, are the apparel of the night, as of the day We slip off our boots, drop in our places side by side, draw over us our blankets;

and sleep, sound and sweet, soon comes to every eyelid. The man who can sleep at all, in camp, commonly sleeps soundly and well.

I spoke in the beginning of this letter of the absence of anything exciting in camp. We have since had something particularly exciting for Company C—the arrival of some boxes of good things sent by our kind friends in Burlington. We had had warning of their coming and were anxiously awaiting them. They reached camp after dark last evening; but the noise of unloading before the captain's tent told everyone that they had come, and an eager crowd hurried to the spot. A couple of pickaxes were quickly put in use. The covers flew off as if blown upwards by the explosive force of the good will and kind feeling imprisoned within, and the parcels were quickly handed out to the favored ones, who thereupon disappeared within the tents, from which shouts of joy and laughter would come pealing as the things within were unpacked. What unrolling of papers and uncovering of boxes there has been, and uncorking of jars and bottles and munching of good things in every tent! A bevy of children, in holiday time, were never more pleased with their presents than we with

our home luxuries, made doubly delicious by our confinement to army fare, and trebly valuable because they were from the friends *at home*. The whole thing was pronounced emphatically "*bully*." I beg you will divest this word of anything of coarseness or slang it may heretofore have had. It is the adjective which in the army expresses the highest form of admiration and is in constant use from the colonel and chaplain to the lowest private. When the soldier has pronounced a thing "bully," he can say no more. I wish you could have heard—and if you had listened sharply I think you might—the cheers and tiger which after roll call at tattoo last night, were given by Company C "for our friends in Burlington."

The health of the regiment is improving. We have but thirteen men on the sick list, and none dangerously ill.

The picket line our brigade is guarding has been moved out several miles, and now runs about two miles this side of Mt. Vernon. The weather is fine and the spirits of the men good. But they do not take kindly to "fatigue duty" on the trenches. They think they had rather be engaged in chasing or fighting rebels than in

"strategy," however important the latter may be in all wars. Yours, B.

XIV

Losses by Death—An Abortive Review

Camp Vermont,
Fairfax Co., Va., Nov. 24, 1862.

Dear Free Press :

Death has again invaded the circle of our company and has taken one of our best. We miss William Spaulding much. We did not expect to bring back all we took away from Burlington, but if asked which would probably be of the first to yield to the exposures of army life, who would have pointed out that fine handsome boy? It seems hard that such should be sacrificed to the demon of rebellion. He had in him the making of a first rate soldier and a useful man. The regularity with which he performed all his military duties, from the day of his enlistment till disabled by sickness, was matter of remark; and his tall figure and pleasant face, in the first file of the company, was always a pleasant sight. He began to lose flesh and strength without any

apparently sufficient reasons, and finally went into the regimental hospital; grew better, was placed on guard at a private house near here, where he had the shelter of a roof, caught cold, and died from congestion of the lungs. Captain Page, Lieutenant Wing, the chaplain and surgeon, did all they could for him. He received calmly the intelligence that he must die, said he was ready, sent words of parting remembrance and admonition to his friends, and passed away quietly. His death has cast a shadow over the company, and we ask ourselves, "who will be the next?"

One of the line officers of the regiment, Lieutenant Howard of the Northfield company, died in the hospital on Friday, from inflammation of the brain. The two deaths were made the occasion of some impressive remarks by Chaplain Brastow, at divine service yesterday.

Many as are the contrasts between our life in the army and that we lead at home, there is none greater than that between our Sabbaths there and here. As we stood at regimental service yesterday, our chapel a vacant spot before the colonel's tent, our heads canopied only by the grey clouds drifting swiftly to the southwest, and the chill

November wind blowing through our ranks, I could not but cast back a thought to the quiet and comfortable New England sanctuaries many of us have been wont to worship in. But we were better off than most of the regiments in the army, for but few of them, probably, had any Sabbath service at all.

We have had four days of rain and I have the facts for an essay on Virginia *mud*, whenever I get time to write it, and I assure you it is a *deep* subject.

Orders were out on Thursday for a grand review at Fort Albany, six miles from here, of all the forces on this side of the river. It was the third and hardest day of the storm. A countermand was expected; but none came, and the Twelfth, with three other regiments, took up its line of march. The mud varied from a thin porridge of one part red clay to three parts water, to a thick adhesive salve of three parts clay to one of water—there or thereabouts—I may not give the proportions exactly It was a hard march. The foot planted in the red salve alluded to, is lifted with some difficulty, and comes up a number of sizes larger, and three or four pounds heavier. A mile or two of such marching tries

the sturdiest muscles. The march of our boys was that of a host of conquering heroes. They took the whole country—along with them, on their soles. In the lack of any affection on the part of the inhabitants, it was delightful to find such a strong attachment on the part of the "sacred soil." These were the only compensations. We couldn't see, somehow, the connection between this tramp through the mud, and the business of crushing out the rebellion; and when, a mile beyond Alexandria, a courier met the column with orders to return to camp, the suspicion that all might just as well have staid in camp, became general. The substance of the proceeding was that four thousand men had a march of eight miles in a storm which made the bare idea of a review an absurdity—that was all. Perhaps "somebody blundered."

The winter quarters of this regiment are to be long huts, one for a company, made of logs set endwise in the ground, on which a roof of boards will be placed. They make slow progress. The truth is this brigade has *a good deal to do*. Our regiments have a picket line of six miles to guard, the nearest point of which is five or six miles from camp. They furnish a thousand men

daily, in good weather, to dig in the trenches of Fort Lyon. They have to cut the timber for their winter quarters and construct the same, and they have to fill up the interstices of time with drill. If Uncle Sam's $20 a month is not pretty generally earned, so far, in this brigade, some of us are much mistaken.

The picket service is becoming arduous. The pickets are out 48 hours. At many of the stations no fire is allowed, and especial vigilance is enjoined, so that little sleep can be obtained; and with all precautions there is a chance of meeting a shot from some of the rebel spies and straggling guerrillas who hover around the outer circle of our lines. Saturday night a couple of the boys in our company were thus fired on. Add to these inconveniences the special discomforts of rain and deep mud, and picket service becomes anything but romantic.

A sad event occurred on Wednesday on the picket line. A corporal of the Fourteenth regiment while instructing a soldier how to halt and cover with his piece any suspected enemy approaching the station, fired off his gun, shooting the man through the breast. The wound

was a terrible one, and I am told the man must die.

I noticed in a letter from the Thirteenth regiment, printed in the daily *Times* a week or more ago, a statement that but few of the articles sent from home for the comfort of sick soldiers ever reach them, owing to the fact that the officers appropriate them to their own use. There may be individual cases of that sort, take the army through ; but that such theft from sick men, of the things they prize most, is *customary* down here, I do not believe. I *know* that in the hospital of the Twelfth the things sent in for the soldiers are put to their proper use. I am a frequent visitor at the hospital and have been glad to note the improvements added daily. Its area has been enlarged, while the number of patients has decreased. It is floored and boarded up on the sides. Neat iron bedsteads have been supplied, and the sick men sleep between sheets furnished by the Ladies' Relief Association of Washington. It is to the credit of Surgeon Ketchum that his hospital is comfortable far beyond the average. Mr. S. Prentice, of the Committee of the Vermonters' Relief Association, Washington,

is a frequent visitor, and brings supplies of needed articles.

The visit of the Committee of the Ladies of Burlington, Mrs. Dr. Thayer and Mrs. Platt, to our camp yesterday, accompanied by Mrs. Chittenden and Dr. Hatch, was a most agreeable surprise. It was a double pleasure to see faces from home, and *ladies'* faces, which are novelties in camp.

The weather has come off fine, clear and frosty after the storm.

Yours, B.

XV

Thanksgiving Day in Camp

Camp Vermont,
Fairfax Co., Va., Dec. 6, 1862.

Dear Free Press:

One or two noticeable events have broken the monotony of our camp life since I wrote you last. The first was the departure of three regiments of the brigade, which took place ten days ago. The order came at 8 o'clock in the evening, and the "bully Thirteenth," as its boys delight to call themselves, was on the march through our camp

at nine, the Fourteenth and Fifteenth following with little delay. The Twelfth had orders to pack knapsacks and be in readiness to move at a moment's notice, and our own camp was all astir with the bustle of preparation. The night was dark and rainy, and as the other regiments passed on the double quick through our camp, their dark columns visible only by the light of the camp fires, our boys cheering them and they cheering lustily in response, the scene was not devoid of excitement. Every man in the ranks believed that such a sudden night march to the front meant immediate action, and the haste and hearty shouting showed that the prospect was a welcome one. The Twelfth would have gone with equal cheerfulness; but the expected order for us to fall in did not come. We have remained, doing picket duty with the Sixteenth. The service takes about all the effective men of each regiment, each going on for 48 hours. The marching to and from consumes the best part of another day, making in effect three days' hard duty out of every four. As the weather has been cold, and most of the boys get little sleep at night while out, they have found the duty pretty severe; but they take it for the most part without murmuring. The

return of the other regiments, all three of which have come back to us, will, however, greatly lighten the service hereafter.

Thanksgiving was the second "big thing" of the past fortnight. It was not quite what it would have been had the six or seven tons of good things sent to different companies from Vermont arrived in season ; but it was emphatically a gay and festive time. The day was clear, air cool and bracing, sunshine bright and invigorating. The boys of our company made some fun over their Thanksgiving breakfast of hard tack and cold beans, but possessed their souls in patience in view of the forthcoming feast of fat things, for we had heard that our boxes from home were at Alexandria, and the wagons had gone for them. At 10 o'clock the regiment assembled for service. Gov Holbrook's proclamation was read by Chaplain Brastow, and was followed by an excellent Thanksgiving discourse. At its close, Col. Blunt addressed the regiment, expressing his thankfulness that he could see around him so many of his men in health ; urging an orderly observance of the day; and inviting the men to meet the officers after dinner on the parade ground for an hour or two of social sport and enjoyment. An hour later

the teams arrived with but four of the forty big boxes expected, and the unwelcome news that the rest would not reach Alexandria till the next day Most of the companies were in the same predicament. Company I had a big box, and made a big dinner, setting the tables in the open air, to which they invited the field and staff officers. Two or three men of Company C received boxes, with as many roast turkeys, which they shared liberally with their comrades, so that a number of us had Thanksgiving fare, and feasted with good cheer and a thousand kind thoughts of the homes and friends we left behind us. We knew that they were thinking of us at the same time. If each thought of affection and good will had had visible wings, what a cloud of messengers would have darkened the air between Vermont and Virginia that day !

At 2 o'clock, the regiment turned out on the parade ground. The colonel had procured a foot ball. Sides were arranged by the lieutenant colonel, and two or three royal games of foot ball —most manly of sports, and closest in its mimicry of actual warfare—were played. The lieutenant colonel, chaplain and other officers, mingled in the crowd ; captains took rough-and-

tumble overthrows from privates; shins were barked and ankles sprained; but all was given and taken in good part. Many joined in games of base ball; others formed rings and watched the friendly contests of the champion wrestlers of the different companies; others laughed at the meanderings of some of their comrades, blindfolded by the colonel and set to walk at a mark. It was a "tall time" all round. Nor did it end with daylight. In the evening a floor of boards, laid upon the ground, furnished a ball room, of which the blue arch above was the canopy and the bright moon the chandelier. Company C turned out a violin, guitar and two flutes for an orchestra; some other company furnished another violin, and a grand Thanksgiving ball came off in style. I did not notice any satin slippers. The "light fantastic toe" was for the most part clad in "*gunboats*," as the men call the army shoes, and the nearest approach to crinoline was a light blue overcoat; but the list was danced through, from country dances to the lancers, and the gay assembly did not break up until half-past nine.

So ended Thanksgiving day proper; but the enjoyment of the bigger portion of the creature

comforts sent our company from Vérmont is yet to come. Our Thanksgiving boxes came yesterday after the regiment had gone out on picket; and the few men left behind in camp have been sampling some of the more perishable articles, though booths of brush and picket fires almost extinguished by the snow, are hardly what one would choose as surroundings.

The Thanksgiving dinner of the officers' mess of Company C came off to-day, and was a highly select and recherche affair. The board was spread in the capacious log shanty of Maj. Kingsley and was graced by the presence of the amiable wife of Col. Blunt, who has been domiciled in camp for a week or two, and of the field and staff officers of the Twelfth and the chaplain and surgeon of the Fifteenth. I enclose a copy of the bill of fare, in the composition of which I suspect my editorial brother, of the quartermaster's department, had a hand. It was engrossed on brown wrapping paper, like the Southern newspapers, and every thing on the bill was on the board, sumptuous as it may seem. The good things said I do not feel at liberty to report.

BILL OF FARE.

SHANTY DE KINGSLEY.

THANKSGIVING DINNER.

Camp Vermont, December 6th, 1862.

TABLE D'HOTE.

SOUP.

Nary.

ROAST.

Turkey. Mount Vernon Sauce.

ENTREES.

Pate de pullet, Cochon Sauce.
Fillet de Bœuf—a la smoke.

RELISHES.

Butter, Chittenden Co.,	Kohl Slaw,
Cheese, Stationary,	Chow Chow,
Salt, *ordinaire*,	Sultana Sauce,
Pepper, *a la contraband*,	Tomato Catsup,
Pickles, *a la confusion*,	Sauce de Savoy.

VEGETABLES.

Potatoes, Hibernian and Carolinian.
Onions, *aux fragantes.*

PASTRY.

Mince Pie, Apple Pie.

DESSERT.

Coffee, Doughnuts, Ginger-Schnapps,
Sweet Cak,e Fruit Cake,
Apples, Baldwin.

We have had our second snow storm. It began yesterday, and continued through a bitter night. Toward night the Thirteenth and Fourteenth regiments came in from Union Mills—the Fifteenth came in the night before—and marched into their deserted camps, close by us. They brought only shelter tents, and the prospect of camping down in the snow, with little food, no fuel, and scanty shelter, was a pretty black one for them, till our officers went over and offered the hospitalities of the Twelfth, which were gratefully accepted. The absence of most of our men on picket, left a good deal of vacant room in our tents, which were soon filled with wet and tired men of the other regiments. They went away this morning warmed, rested and fed.

The weather to-day is very cold and I fear that our boys on picket will suffer to-night, though they will have frozen ground to lie on instead of muddy slush, which will be so far an improvement.

The health of the regiment continues much better than the average of the brigade.

Sunday Morning, December 9.

We hear that General Stoughton will assume command to-day The brigade would, how-

ever, I think, be satisfied to remain under command of Colonel Blunt.

Thermometer only 15° above zero to-day.

Yours, B.

XVI.

The Brigade moves to Fairfax Court House.

Camp near Fairfax Court House, Va.,
December 15th, 1862.

Dear Free Press:

More moves on the big chess board of which States and counties are the squares and divisions and brigades the pieces. And as the older troops push to the front, the reserves, of which the Second Vermont brigade is a portion, move up and occupy the more advanced positions of the lines of defense around Washington, vacated by our predecessors.

General Sigel's division marched to the support of Burnside last week, and our brigade has stepped into their deserted places. Our five regiments are now in camp round Fairfax Court House and along the line to Centreville, doing picket duty on the lines near the latter place.

The orders for us to march came on Thursday evening last, while the Twelfth was out on picket. The boys were ordered in and reached camp about 10 o'clock. They came in singing "John Brown" and camp was soon humming with the bustle and stir of breaking camp. Big fires made of the no longer needed packing boxes which came from Vermont, were soon blazing in the company streets, and the work of packing knapsacks began. With most of the boys the first thought was for the creature comforts still remaining from the Thanksgiving supply, and each man proceeded to make sure of *some* of them, by putting himself outside of such a portion as his capacity would admit of, be the same more or less. It was midnight before the camp was still. After two hours or so of slumber we were aroused; reveille was sounded at 3; the tents were struck at 4; the line of march was formed at 5; and by 6 the brigade was on its way The morning was a magnificent one, clear, rosy and frosty, and the step of the men was light and springy as they filed away. I was on special duty and did not accompany the column. At 4 o'clock P M. the Twelfth halted at their present camping ground about a mile west of Fairfax Court House, having

with the brigade accomplished a march of *twenty miles*. Though the pace was moderate and the stops frequent, it was altogether the severest march as yet made by our regiment. It is to be remembered that in such a march the weight of the packed knapsack about doubles the amount of exertion. Most soldiers would prefer a march of twice the distance in light marching order. Our boys marched well, however. But twelve of the Twelfth fell to the rear—a proportion of stragglers less, as I am told, than that of any of the other regiments. Of Company C, one man, just convalescent from a three weeks' run of fever, who should not have attempted to march at all, was taken up by one of the ambulances. Another man who had been off duty from ill health came in with the stragglers; the rest, to a man, marched into our present camp with the colors.

I returned to Camp Vermont the day after. The Third brigade of Casey's division was already installed in the winter quarters built with so much labor by the Vermont regiments. The Fourth Delaware was in the camp of the Twelfth, and a new order of things was in force. The quiet and discipline of the Vermont camps had disappeared. Muskets were popping promis-

cuously all around the camps ; much petty thieving appeared to be on foot ; and Mr. Mason, the gray headed "neutral" who owns the manor, was praying for the return of the Vermont brigade. His fences were lowering with remarkable rapidity; the roofs of some of his out-houses had quite disappeared, and Colonel Grimshaw, commanding the brigade, had his headquarters in the front parlor of his mansion. I could not give him a great deal of sympathy, for I believe him to be a rebel; but I was glad the spoliation was not the work of our Vermont boys.

I followed the regiment on Sunday, taking the military railroad train to Fairfax Station. Here, and all along the road to the dirty little village of Fairfax Court House, four miles to the north, I struck the column of an army corps pushing on to the front. Here a drove of beef cattle ; next a battery of Parrot guns ; there a travel-worn regiment, marching with tired lag and frequent hunching up of their heavy knapsacks ; then one resting by the wayside ; then a battery of brass twenty-pounders ; then another regiment and another ; and long white lines of army wagons filling every vacant rod of road for miles and miles as far as the eye could reach. It was

the rear of the Twelfth Army Corps, from Harper's Ferry and Frederick, en route for Dumfries to be in supporting distance of Burnside; and for over twenty hours the stream of men and material of war had flowed over the road in the same way It is only after seeing such a movement that one begins to realize something of the size of the business which is now the occupation of the nation.

I turned from the road across the fields to a pine grove in which lay the camp of the Twelfth. The regiment was drawn up in square at the edge of the timber. As I drew near, the strains of "Shining Shore" broke the stillness, and as I joined the body, the men were standing with bared heads, as the chaplain invoked the blessing of God on our cause, on our fellow soldiers now perhaps in deadly fight,* on our own humble efforts, and on the homes we left to come to the war. It was a transition, in a step, from the strong rush of the tide of war to a quiet eddy of Christian worship, and the contrast was a striking one.

*Gen. Burnside was now in command of the Army of the Potomac, and having fought the disastrous battle of Fredericksburg, Dec. 13, was now about to recross the Rappahannock.

We are at present under shelter tents, pitched promiscuously among the pine trees. The weather is mild and fine, and the ground as dry as May We can hardly realize that it is the middle of December. How long we shall remain here, of course we do not know.

A new brigade band of seventeen pieces has been organized under the leadership of Mr. Clark of St. Johnsbury, whose concerts in Burlington you doubtless remember. The music for dress parade to-night was furnished by the band and was a decidedly attractive feature.

Our new Brigadier General, Stoughton, came and took command a week ago yesterday, and Colonel Blunt has returned to the command of the Twelfth. During his absence Lieut. Colonel Farnham has shown every quality of an efficient and courteous regimental commander.

We are waiting with intense interest for news of the results of the movements on Richmond. Providence seems to be smiling on us, in this fine weather, and we cannot doubt the triumph of our arms. If between Burnside and Banks the rebel capital cannot be taken, who shall next attempt the job?

P S. The rain has come before our tents have, and a juicy time is in progress.

Yours, B.

XVII.

Picket Duty on Cub Run.

Picket Camp, Centreville, Va.,
December 19th, 1862.

Dear Free Press

The main camp of our brigade is at Fairfax Court House, eight miles back of here. From thence a regiment is sent every four days to picket the lines in this vicinity The turn of the Twelfth came day before yesterday. We started at 7.30 A. M., with two days' rations in our haversacks, and were marched briskly hither over the Centreville turnpike, which has been so often filled with the columns of the army of the Potomac, in advance or in retreat. The skeletons of horses and mules, left to rot as they fell, were frequent ornaments of the highway, and the remains of knapsacks, bayonet sheaths, and here and there a broken musket, strewn along the road, told the story of strife and disaster in months and years gone by. Three hours brought

us to the highlands of Centreville, covered with forts, eight of which are in sight from this camp, connected by miles of the rebel riflepits which kept McClellan so long at bay during the impatient months of last winter. One of the famous "quaker" guns lies near our camp.

The regiment halted here, and the right wing was at once despatched to the picket lines, Company C, under command of Lieutenant Wing, forming a portion of the detachment. Three miles of sharp marching across the fields, over a surface seamed with ditches and covered with a little low vine which tries its best to trip up the traveller, brought us, about noon, to the picket lines; and the men were at once distributed to the stations, to relieve the men of the Sixteenth regiment, who for four days had kept watch and ward on the line. The space allotted to Company C extended along the turbid stream of Cub Run, from a point near its junction with Bull Run, up to and beyond the ford and bridge where "Fighting Dick" Richardson opened the first battle of Bull Run, July 18th, 1861. Back from the stream a little are the camps of three Georgia and Kentucky regiments and a battery of rebel artillery, which wintered here last

winter. The huts are of logs plastered with mud, with shed roofs of long split shingles or of poles covered with clay, each having a small aperture for a window, and capacious fire place and chimney of stone and mud masonry They are a portion of the famous hut camps of Beauregard's army, which cover the desirable camping spots for many a mile around, in which the rebel army spent a comfortable winter, while our army was shivering in tents. Our reserves are now posted in them—a picket reserve, as you know, is a body of 15 or 20 men, on which the pickets fall back for support if attacked, and from which men are sent at intervals to relieve the men on the lines—and we find them warm and comfortable shelter on these cold nights.

Let me describe to you a day and night of picket duty We were stationed within hailing distance of each other, one man at a station for the most part, but sometimes two or three together at posts requiring especial vigilance, along the eastern bank of Cub Run, a small stream, a rod or two wide, which for the present is the boundary of Uncle Sam's absolute control. Beyond it is debatable ground, a cavalry patrol of the First Virginia (loyal) cavalry, and occa-

sional reconnoitering expeditions, alone disputing its possession with the enemy A cavalry vidette is posted on the Gainesville road, and a patrol is sent out daily over the road for four or five miles.

We took our posts, in a flurry of snow, at noon. Each man's thought was first of his fire and next of his dinner. The nearest fence or brush-heap furnishes the means of replenishing the one, the haversack supplies the other. From its depths the picket produces a tin plate, a piece of raw pork, a paper of ground coffee, and a supply of hard tack. If inclined for a warm meal, he cuts a slice or two of his pork and fries it on his plate, if less fastidious, he takes it raw with his hard bread. His cup is filled from his canteen and placed on the fire, and a cup of coffee is soon steaming under his nose. With such materials, and the appetite gained by a march of a dozen miles, a royal meal is soon made.

The afternoon passed with little incident. At my station I had a solitary visitor, a gaunt and yellow F. F. V., who came to say that he was anxious to save the rails he had left, around his cattle yard, and rather than have them burned he would draw some wood for the pickets—a sug-

gestion which found favor with our boys, and the old fellow found occupation enough for himself, boy and yoke of oxen, for a good share of the day, hauling wood to the stations. He said he was a Virginian born, owned a farm of 150 acres, had no apples and no orchard to raise any with, no potatoes either, nothing that a soldier would eat except corn meal, and couldn't sell any of that, as his supply was small and he could not cross the picket line to mill; had never taken the oath of allegiance nor been asked to take it; was a peaceable man himself, and meant to keep friends with the soldiers the best way he knew how; found some good men and some hard fellows among them on both sides; had lost a great deal by the war; but felt most the loss of his horses, which he said were taken from his stable while he was sick by some Union soldiers; had no slaves nor anybody to help him but his boy; had no gun of any description and never owned one; was glad to believe the war could not last forever, and only hoped it would be over in time to leave him some of his fences and timber.

At our reserve station, in the old rebel artillery camp, some stir was occasioned by a colored individual, one of a family of free negroes who own

a fine farm of 400 acres just across the Run, who came in to say that a man believed to be a secesh soldier dressed in citizen's clothes, had just been at his house and made inquiries as to the number and position of our pickets. Lieutenant Wing at once started out with two or three men, saw the fellow making tracks for the woods, and gave chase. He gained the timber, however, and made good his escape. As such a search for information might be preliminary to a rebel dash on our picket line, the affair had a tendency to put our men on the alert. Further down the line the men of another company, while scouting round a farmhouse, discovered in the barn a suspicious looking box, which, when opened, disclosed within a metallic burial case, containing a corpse, which the family there averred to be the body of a Southern officer, which was left there on the retreat of the rebel army last March, with directions to keep it until it should be sent for. But it had not been sent for and perhaps never will be.

The night settled down clear and very cold.—With the darkness came orders to put out the picket fires or keep them smouldering without flame. Your humble servant was stationed on

the bank of Cub Run, opposite a rude foot bridge thrown across the stream. My turns of duty were from 4 to 8 and 10 to 12 P M., and from 2 to 4 and 6 to 8 A. M. The stars shone bright; but there was little else to see. The stream rippled away with constant murmur and the wind sighed and rustled through the trees; but there was little else to hear, till about midnight, when the reports of fire arms came from the direction of the cavalry vidette, further out on the battle-field, two or three miles away, and shortly after a sound of the clatter of hoofs on the frozen ground. The sound died away and the night was still as before. When I was relieved and returned to the reserve, the fires were burning brightly in the wide fire places, and seated around we told stories and cracked jokes, and discussed the campaign, and wondered where Banks had gone. Suddenly a hasty step is heard without, and one of the pickets puts in his head at the door to announce that men are moving on the opposite bank of the stream. While he is talking, bang goes a musket from our line to the left, and then another. *Something* is going on, or else somebody is unnecessarily excited. We seize our pieces, and hurry down to the ford, close

by, where if anywhere a rebel party would probably attempt a crossing, and are not quieted by hearing in a whisper from the three trusty men stationed there, that a small party of men had just come stealthily along the opposite bank, stopped at the ford, discussed in a low tone the expediency of crossing, and then, disturbed by the firing and stir down our line to the left, had hastily retired.

Our boys kept quiet, for the comers were invisible in the shadow of the opposite bank; had they stepped into the water they would have been fired on. Of course they might return and more with them, and dropping low, so as to get a sight against the star-lit horizon, we awaited developments. A hostile body attempting the crossing about there would have met the contents of fifteen rifled muskets, tolerably well aimed. But no more sound was heard, and the reserve returned to their post. A sergeant and two men, sent down the line, had in the meantime discovered that the shots heard were fired by two of our sentinels, who hearing a movement in the bushes across the run, had fired at random. I returned to my sentry post, but there was no more alarm. I saw the big dipper in the North tip up so that

its contents, be they of water, or milk from the milky way, must have run out over the handle. I saw the triple-studded belt of Orion pass across the sky I saw two meteors shoot along the horizon, and that was all the shooting. I saw the old moon, wasted to a slender crescent, come up in the east. I saw the sun rise very red in the face at the thought that he had overslept himself till half past seven, on such a glorious morning. I heard a song bird or two piping sweetly from the woods; but I neither saw nor heard any rebels. With daylight, however, a Union cavalry man, on foot, bareheaded, with scratched face and eyes still wild with fright, came to our line and told a story which explained the alarm of the midnight. The cavalry vidette, sixteen in number, of which he was one, posted out some three or four miles, while sleeping around their fires had been charged into by a party of White's rebel cavalry, who captured all their horses and seven or eight of their number; the rest scattered into the bush in all directions, and it was doubtless some of them trying to make their way into Centreville, who created the alarm along our line, and came so near being fired on by our men at the ford.

December 20.

I hear this morning that the infantry pickets are to be withdrawn from the line along Cub Run, letting cavalry take their places, and that we shall go into the redoubt close by, to-day, to be relieved, I suppose, to-morrow, by another regiment of the brigade. A grand review of the other four regiments by General Stoughton took place yesterday at Fairfax Court House.

Yours, B.

XVIII.

CHRISTMAS IN CAMP

CAMP NEAR FAIRFAX C. H.,
December 26, 1862.

Dear Free Press:

We have had a very fair Christmas in camp. The day was as mild as May By hard work the day before our mess had "stockaded" our tent and it is now a little log house with a canvas roof. We have in it a "California stove"—a sheet of iron over a square hole in the ground—and as we have been confined of late to rations of hard tack and salt pork, we decided to have a special Christmas dinner.

We got some excellent oysters of the sutler, also some potatoes. Two of the boys went off to a clean, free-negro family, about a mile off, and got two quarts of rich milk, some hickory nuts, and some dried peaches. I officiated as cook, and, as all agreed, got up a capital dinner. I made as good an oyster soup as one often gets, and fried some oysters with bread crumbs—for we are the fortunate owners of a frying-pan. The potatoes were boiled in a tin pan, and were as mealy as any I ever ate. We had, besides, good Vermont butter, boiled pork, good bread, and closed a luxurious meal with nuts, raisins and apples, and cocoa-nut cakes just sent from home. For supper we had rice and milk and stewed plums. Now that is not such bad living for poor soldiers, is it? But we do not have it every day ; though we have had many luxuries since our Thanksgiving boxes came.

We have a pleasant camp ground just now, and if allowed to remain, shall make ourselves quite comfortable.

We had a visit from Dr. Thayer in our tent to-night. It was good for sore eyes to see the doctor and hear directly from home ; and he will

tell you when he gets back that he found here a right hearty looking set of fellows.

December 27th.

We are in quite a stir to-night. Cannonading has been heard to the south all the afternoon* and we are under orders to be ready to march at a moment's notice, with one day's cooked rations. It is rumored that we are to be ordered forward in course of a week, anyhow

Yours, B.

XIX.

Stuart's Raid and Repulse from Fairfax Court House.

Camp Near Fairfax C. H., Va.,
December 29, 1862.

Dear Free Press :

We have been having rather stirring times during the past twenty-four hours. During the day on Sunday, rumors of a sharp engagement at Dumfries, twenty-five miles south of us, and the hurrying forward of troops to points threatened,

*This was the first engagement of Stuart's raid, being his attack upon Dumfries, Va., and repulse by the garrison.

reached us, and prepared us for a start. Just at night-fall came the command to fall in. Col. Blunt was absent at Alexandria, in attendance on a court martial, and Lieut. Col. Farnham was in command, by whom we were marched hastily to Fairfax Court House. The Thirteenth and Fourteenth Vermont regiments and the Second Connecticut battery, attached to our brigade, moved with us. We were hurried straight through the village, and it was not until we halted behind a long breastwork, commanding the sweep of plain to the east, that we had time to ask ourselves what it all meant. The word was soon passed about that a formidable rebel raid was in progress; that a large rebel cavalry force was approaching Burke's Station, four or five miles below us; that an attack on Fairfax Court House was anticipated, and that Gen. Stoughton with the Vermont brigade must hold the position. Three regiments and three guns of the battery were to defend the village; the Fifteenth was at Centreville on picket, and the Sixteenth, with three guns, was sent to Fairfax Station.

The Twelfth manned the centre of the breastwork, extending across the Alexandria turnpike, along which the enemy was expected to advance.

Two companies of the Thirteenth and a portion of the Fourteenth were placed on our right; the remainder of the Thirteenth on our left, and the balance of the Fourteenth a short distance in our rear. A brass howitzer and two rifled pieces were placed on the turnpike. Companies B and G of the Twelfth, under command of Captain Paul, were sent forward half a mile on the road, and a squad of the First Virginia (union) cavalry was placed still further out.

So arranged, we waited hour after hour of the bright moonlight night. Occasionally a mounted orderly dashed up to Gen. Stoughton with accounts of the rebel advance, but nothing specially exciting took place till about eleven, when suddenly the situation became interesting. First came a courier with a message for Gen. Stoughton, whose reply, distinctly audible to our portion of the line, was: "Tell him my communication with Gen. Abercrombie is cut off; but I can hold my own here, and will do it." Then came orders to load, and instructions for the front rank, —your humble servant was fortunate enough to be in that rank—to do the firing, if ordered to fire, and the rear rank to do the loading, passing the loaded pieces to their file leaders. Then

came a dash of horsemen down the road, riding helter-skelter and "the devil take the hindmost." We did not know then what it meant, but learned afterwards that it was the cavalry picket, driven in and frightened half to death by the rebels. The stir among our officers which followed told us, however, that it meant something. Col. Farnham rode along the line, giving the men their instructions. Major Kingsley added some words of caution and injunctions to fire low, and General Stoughton, riding up, said: "You are to hold this entrenchment, my men. Keep cool, never flinch, and behave worthy of the good name won for Vermont troops by the First brigade. File closers, do your duty, and if any man attempts to run, use your bayonets!" The captains, each in his own way, added their encouragements. The men on their part needed no incentive; and I have no doubt, had its possession been contested, that breastwork would have been held in a way which would have brought no disgrace on our Green Mountain State.

We had waited in silence a few minutes, when our ears caught a faint tramp of cavalry, half a mile away where our skirmishers were posted; then some scattered pistol shots; then shrill

cheers as of a cavalry squadron on a charge; and then the flash and rattle of the first hostile volley fired by any portion of the Twelfth in this war. It was a splendid volley, too. Both companies fired at once, and their guns went off like one piece. The effects of the volley were not learned till daylight; but I may as well anticipate my story, and give them here. They were eight rebel troopers wounded and removed by their comrades—this our men learned from a man in front of whose house, a little ways on, the rebels rallied —three horses killed; three saddles, a rebel carbine, manufactured in Richmond, and a Colt's revolver, picked up on the ground; and a horse, with U S. on his flank, found riderless in the road and recaptured. The rebel troopers scattered in all directions but rallied further back. Our men expected a second charge, and were ready for it, but after a short halt the rebels turned and rapidly retreated.

At the breastwork we knew nothing of these details. We heard the firing, and taking it for the opening drops of the shower waited patiently for what should come next. Nothing came, however. All was still again. In half an hour camp fires began to show themselves about a mile in

front, and our artillery was ordered to try its hand on them. Bang went the guns, under our noses, and whiz went the shells, but they drew no response. A reconnoissance was next ordered. Capt. Ormsbee of Co. G—one of our best captains—with 30 men of his own and Company B marched over to the fires. They were found to be fires of brush built to deceive us. A free negro, whose house was near by, informed Capt. O that the rebels were under command of Generals Fitzhugh Lee and Stuart, both of whom had been in his house an hour before.

They had, he said, two brigades of cavalry and some artillery, and they had pushed on to the north. This news was taken to mean that they were making a circuit and would probably shortly attack from the north or west. We were accordingly double-quicked back to Fairfax Court House, and were posted (I speak now only of the Twelfth) on the brow of a hill, in good position to receive a charge of cavalry. Here we waited through the rest of the night. The moon set; the air grew cold; the ground froze under our feet; but we had nothing to do but to shiver and nod over our guns, till daylight. At sunrise we were glad to be marched back to camp,

and to throw ourselves into our tents, where most of the men have slept through the day, taking rest while they can get it, for we are still ordered to be in readiness for instant marching. I doubt if we shall go out to-night, however. We hear to-day that the rebel cavalry, having made one of the most daring raids of the war, to within a dozen miles of Washington, have pushed on to Leesburg,* and will doubtless make a successful escape through the mountains.

I have given so much space to this little skirmish because it is the thing of greatest excitement with us at present, and not, of course, for its essential importance. But it has been an interesting bit of experience and not without value in its effect upon the discipline of the brigade. It has added to the confidence of the men in their officers, from Gen. Stoughton down, and I guess the men did not disappoint their commanders. To-day our colonel is again with us. He started with the adjutant to join the regiment last night by way of the turnpike, which was then held for two miles or more by the rebels, but was advised by Capt. Erhardt, in command of a squadron of

*This was erroneous. Stuart returned by way of Warrenton to Culpeper Court House.

the Vermont cavalry at Annandale, not to attempt to go through, and wisely took his advice. It would have been sorrow for us had he been taken by Stuart's troopers.

December 30th.

We have spent an undisturbed night, and I have time this morning to add one or two more particulars of the affair of night before last. Our pickets have taken four or five prisoners of the rebel cavalry. One was a hard looking, butternut-clad trooper, apparently just recovering from a bad spree ; he accounted for his used up appearance by averring that they had been six days in the saddle. The others were taken by the Vermont cavalry, and will go part way toward balancing the loss of Lieut. Cummings of Company D of the Vermont cavalry and three of his men, who were out on picket and were taken by Stuart's men. It is ascertained that the forces of Stuart and Fitzhugh Lee made a circuit around us, passing between us and Washington and round to Chantilly on the west of us, where a body of 300 cavalry, including a portion of the Vermont cavalry, from Drainsville, came upon them ; but finding themselves in the presence of a

greatly superior force, retreated. It was reported in Washington, and fully believed by many, that our whole brigade had been captured.

Reinforcements have now been sent out to our support, and we anticipate no serious danger. Still affairs are in a rather feverish state, and we may be marched in any direction at any moment.

The weather is remarkable—days very mild, with magnificent sunshine; nights cooler, but still not much like Vermont.

Yours, B.

XX.

The New Year and the Emancipation Proclamation.

Camp near Fairfax C. H., Va.,
January 10, 1863.

Dear Free Press

I must alter the 62 I have written by force of a twelve month's habit, to 63—which reminds me that the old year has been made into the new since I wrote you last. The old year has taken with him three months of our term of service. We cannot hope that the coming months will deal with us as gently as have the past. Rough as

portions of our army life have been, we have thus far seen but little of the roughest part of war. But it must come, though its approach is so gradual that we hardly perceive it. From the security of our camp of instruction on Capitol Hill we passed to the more arduous duties of work on intrenchments and picket service, at Camp Vermont. We exchanged that for our present more exposed position, where picket duty means watch for rebel cavalry, and where some of us have met and drawn trigger on the enemy In time, no doubt, will come the still harder experience of protracted marches, of the shock of battle, of wounds and capture and death for some of us. More than this, the war as a whole is to be more desperate and deadly in future, because waged with a foe maddened by privations and loss of property, and especially by the President's Proclamation of Freedom. We have already ceased to hear much talk about "playing at war." It is owned to be *work* and pretty earnest work, now; and if it grows hotter as a whole, it will of course be the harder in its parts. But come what will, I for one—and I believe I am one of many thousand such—shall "endure hardness" more cheerfully, and fight, when called to, more heart-

ily, because Freedom has been proclaimed throughout the land for whose unity and welfare we struggle, though its full accomplishment may cost years of trial and trouble.

Our present camp is on a pleasant slope, stretching out to the south-east to a broad *campus* on which take place the brigade drills to which General Stoughton treats the brigade almost daily. In the rear, the lines of tents extend into a fine grove of pines which kindly protect us from all winds but the east. A brook near by on our left, affords us water A regimental order forbids the cutting of trees within 200 yards of the camp, and ensures to us the protection of our tall evergreens. The ground has been cleared and leveled, and the underbrush cut away from under the trees. On the whole, it is the pleasantest spot we have as yet occupied, and if we must spend the winter in this region, we shall be content to spend it here. The colonel and his staff have had their tents surrounded by sides of split logs with fire-places and chimneys of brick, and the men have raised their tents on stockades of logs, which detract somewhat from the appearance of the company streets, for it is impossible

to give to a row of little log huts, plastered with mud, the neat appearance of a line of tents.

Our camp is graced by the presence of the accomplished wives of Colonel Blunt, Lieut. Colonel Farnham and Captain Ormsbee, who interest themselves in the hospitals and sick men, and give to us all, in a measure, the refining influence of woman's presence, without which any collection of men becomes more or less of a bear garden.

The time of the regiment, at present, is mainly devoted to drill, with occasional episodes of picket duty; and we are on the whole making marked progress in discipline and drill. General Stoughton, in a general order issued a day or two since, declares that in these respects this brigade already compares well with the troops of other States, around us.

January 12.

My letter was interrupted by an order which sent the right wing of the Twelfth out on picket duty at Chantilly. The twenty-four hours did not pass without some incidents, which, if they were the first of their kind, might deserve mention; but having already given you some idea of picket duty here, I let them pass.

We are enjoying, this evening, a visit from our friend, and fellow-townsman to many of us, J. A. Shedd. Yours, B.

XXI.

Return After a Furlough.

Camp near Wolf Run Shoals, Va.,
February 7, 1863.*

Dear Free Press:

Once more in camp! For your humble servant, after eighteen days' absence on furlough, the change is from the snows of Vermont to the mud of Virginia; from the peace and comfort of New England homes to the insecurity and desolation of this part of the field of war; from sleeping between sheets and eating at tables and other luxuries of civilization, to tent life and camp fare. For the Twelfth, also, the change within the three weeks past is not a slight one. It has exchanged the broad stretches and open region of Fairfax Court House, for a rough and

*During the month preceding this date, the writer was promoted to a vacant lieutenancy, and received a furlough for twenty days, to enable him to return to Vermont, whither he was called by his duties as President of the Vermont and Boston Telegraph Co., Postmaster of Burlington, and editor of the *Free Press*.

CAMP AT WOLF RUN SHOALS, VA.

broken country, wooded with scrub oaks and second growth pines growing on worn out tobacco fields, and scantily peopled with scattered "secesh" farmers. Near us, several hundred feet below the level of our camps, runs the Occoquan river, a muddy stream about as large as the Winooski. Across it, on the heights beyond, are earthworks thrown up by Beauregard's soldiers last winter, now untenanted.

Our camp is on a knoll from which the men have cleared the pine trees. It is much narrower in its limits than our former fine camp near Fairfax, and it is less attractive in almost every particular.

The first battalion drill since the regiment left Camp Fairfax, came off to-day The men have had all they could do in digging rifle pits, picket duty, constructing corduroy roads,—of which they have made miles between this and Fairfax Station,—and the labor of clearing and making camp; and between rain and snow and mud have had the roughest time they have as yet known. Their spirits are good, however, and as I write, the music of a guitar and violin and well attuned manly voices, serenading the ladies whose presence in camp I have heretofore mentioned, reaches

me on the evening air, and tells of light hearts and good cheer.

Quartermaster Sergeant George H. Bigelow has been appointed first lieutenant in Company B, and detailed as quartermaster of the regiment, and private George I. Hagar, of Company C, has been made sergeant major of the regiment, in place of Sergeant Major Redington, promoted.

February 14.

The Twelfth and Thirteenth regiments have here nearly ten miles of picket line to guard. There have been skirmishes between the cavalry outposts, sights of rebel patrols, and rumors of coming attack from rebel cavalry, enough to keep us somewhat on the alert; but the long roll has not sounded, nor has hostile shot been fired by us. Colonel Blunt has been practicing the men at target firing, and they are making sensible progress in the modern method of administering the "blue pills" which are the only cure for rebellion. Yesterday and the day before, fatigue parties crossed the river and destroyed the earth-works on the heights commanding our camps; but while the roads are in their present condition we can hardly be in great danger from rebel artillery The mud in the roads, where they are

not corduroyed, varies from deep to bottomless, and the rains are frequent enough to keep the roads from settling. A week of sunshine, however, would again enable armies to move.

The weather is quite mild. It is raining as I write, with the thermometer at 58°, and the mercury has been as high as 70° in the sunshine in our camp during the past week. The backbone of the winter, if not of the rebellion, is broken in this region. We shall probably not have more than one more right cold spell, and shall henceforth expect much warm weather.

The health of the regiment has improved and may now be called pretty good, though many of us suffer from the disturbing effect of the water, which is not as good here as we have found in our former camps. Company C is called the healthiest company in the regiment.

The Second Vermont brigade is now, as you know, a portion of the Twenty-second Army Corps,—heretofore called the Reserve Corps, Defences of Washington—under command of Major General Heintzleman, and the Twelfth and Thirteenth Vermont are on the outer line of the new "Department of Washington."

Yours, B.

XXII.

More Snow Storms.

Camp near Wolf Run Shoals, Va.,
February 22, 1863.

Dear Free Press :

I beg leave to withdraw my opinion that the back-bone of the winter if not of the rebellion was broken, in this region. The time is coming, undoubtedly, when both will be shattered; but at present the dorsal columns of the season and of secession are *not* fractured—distinctly not. I am writing in the midst of the hardest snow storm we have seen in Virginia, and one that would not disgrace the bleakest hillside in Old Vermont. The diary of the weather for six days past may be interesting as a sample of a Virginia winter: Tuesday, a fall of from ten to twelve inches of heavy snow Wednesday, snow settling fast, and affording material for some tall snow-balling in the afternoon. [*Mem.* The left wing led by Company C, after a hot battle with the right wing, rallied for a charge, engaged them at half pop-gun range and drove them into their entrenchments;—casualties, two bloody noses and three or four contused eyes from percussion snow balls.

N. B. Wounded all doing well.] Thursday, pouring rain, which carried off the remainder of the snow. Friday, high wind, drying the mud rapidly Saturday, warm, bright sunshine,—air like May ; bluebirds and robins singing, men all out "policing" up the quarters and camp, and enjoying the sweet breath of spring. Sunday opens dark and cold, with a heavy storm of fine dry snow falling at the rate of an inch an hour, drifted as it falls by a cutting east wind, and closes at nightfall with not much short of eighteen inches of snow on a level, and promise of a cold snap of several days' duration.

Picket service is decidedly rough at such a time, and some mothers' hearts I know of would ache could they see their boys out on the picket line, cowering under their booths of pine branches through which the snow and wind find easy entrance, and holding their wet and chilled hands and feet to the fires which struggle for mastery with the storm and at best can only avail to surround them with circles of sposh and mud. But we keep up good heart amid sun or storm, and before this reaches the eyes of our friends, sunshine and mild weather will have returned to us.

It may be thought, perhaps, that there is no need of keeping men out on picket at such a time; but our surroundings here have taught us that constant vigilance, by night and day in all weathers, is the price of safety. We are in the enemy's country, if it *is* but twenty-five miles from Washington. The inhabitants of this region are all "secesh." As wherever we have been in Virginia, the young and able bodied men are all gone. The old men are just quiet and civil enough when in the presence of our soldiers to keep themselves from arrest; but render what aid and comfort they give to any one, to the other side. The women are "*she*cesh" without exception; the little girls sing rebel songs,and the hoopless, dirty and illiterate young ladies of these F. F. V 's boast that their brothers and sweethearts are in the rebel army, and chuckle over the time coming, when the roads settle, when Stonewall Jackson will rout us out of here in a hurry One or two skirmishes of the Michigan cavalry with White's rebel cavalry have occurred near us recently, in one of which our side lost fifteen men, and a cavalry picket was cut off but two days ago within three miles of our camp. Our position at this post is, however, a tolerably

strong one; we have here, with our two regiments, the Third Connecticut battery, Captain Sterling, six brass guns manned by a fine set of fellows; and we are now connected by telegraph with Fairfax Station and Washington, so that reinforcements could be quickly sent out if we should be attacked. I think we could make a stout fight by ourselves if necessary, and hold the post against a much superior force.

I was about to submit some patriotic considertions in view of the fact that this is Washington's birthday, but I spare you.

The regiment has sustained a serious loss in the resignation of Captain Landon of the Rutland company, who has been compelled by business interests to retire from the service. He was an excellent officer and will be much missed by his brother officers.

Our new assistant surgeon, Dr. Ross, has arrived and entered upon his duties.

Yours, B.

XXIII.

The Capture of General Stoughton.

Camp near Wolf Run Shoals, Va.,
March 8, 1863.

Dear Free Press :

The Twelfth is now in the seventh week of its occupancy of its present camp,—a longer stay in one spot than it has yet made. We have formed no such intense attachment to our camp at the Shoals that we shall not be pretty well content to leave it, wherever we may be ordered. The region about us is a dreary one; the camp is less pleasant than our former ones; the time we have thus far spent in it has been during the most trying season of the year; snow, rain, frost and mud have told on the health of the regiment, and we have more sickness than ever before, among both officers and men; our picket duty—in pleasant weather the pleasantest duty of the soldier—has been severe ; and though our situation here might be worse in a thousand particulars, we should all be satisfied to run the risk of not bettering our condition by a move.

You are not to understand that we are disheartened— not at all. "The Red, White and

Blue,"sung by an extemporized quartette, with a stiff chorus of manly voices, coming to my ear as I write, tells a different story from that. We carry a stiff upper lip under all circumstances. About a tenth of the regiment are off duty from measles, fevers, and ailments of one sort or another. The balance are, I think, more resolute in the great purpose of the war than ever. "There is more fight in me," said one of our men yesterday, "than ever before. I supposed when I enlisted that nine months in the service would give me enough of war, and I remained of that opinion till quite lately Now I am *in for the war*, be it long or short." The man who said this had no lack of fight in him at the start, mind you, and I believe he represents a majority of the regiment. Fuller acquaintance with the temper and purposes of the rebels, discussion of the issues involved, and especially the news we get from home of the sayings and doings of the miserable "copperhead" journals and their followers at the North, have stirred to the bottom the fountains of honest indignation, and given strength to the purpose and patriotism of us all. The army is unanimous in this feeling, so far as I can judge. Having enlisted to fight traitors, the soldiers as a

mass propose to fight them *through*, and would like to give those at home the same treatment they do those at the south.

March 9.

I was going to complain of the lack of incident here, but since I began my letter, we have been supplied with some of that missing article. You will have heard by telegraph before this reaches you, of Mosby's dash into Fairfax Court House last night, and the capture in his bed of Brigadier General E. H. Stoughton, commanding this brigade. The camp is humming with the news, but in the uncertainty as to how much that is told of the attending circumstances is truth, I will not attempt to describe this very creditable (to the *rebels*) occurrence. I beg leave to say, however, that none of the disgrace of the affair belongs to the regiments of the brigade. General Stoughton was not taken from the midst of his command. The Vermont regiments nearest to the comfortable brick house which he occupied as his headquarters, were at Fairfax Station, four miles south of him, while the Twelfth and Thirteenth were a dozen miles away The risk of exactly such an operation has been apparent even

to the privates, and has been a matter of frequent remark among officers and men, for weeks past. How could they protect him as long as he kept his quarters at such a distance from them?*

The moral of the transaction is too obvious to need suggestion.

Colonel Blunt has been assigned to the command of the brigade, and is removing his headquarters to Fairfax Station. When *he* is pulled out of bed by guerillas I will let you know

Yours, B.

*Rev. George B. Spaulding of Vergennes, in a communication to the N. Y. *Times*, commenting on the capture of Geueral Stoughton, said that his capture had been predicted in a letter from Fairfax Court House, written ten days before the event. General Stoughton's uncle, Hon. E. W. Stoughton of New York, afterwards U. S. Minister to Russia, took up the matter, avowed his disbelief in the existence of any such prediction, and offered to give $250 to the N. E. Soldiers' Relief Association for the name and residence of any person who had received a letter containing such a prediction. These were furnished to Mr. Stoughton, and he paid over the sum named to the Soldiers' Relief Association.

XXIV

On Staff Duty *

Headquarters Second Vt. Brigade,
Near Wolf Run Shoals, Va.,
March 21, 1863.

Dear Free Press :

I am glad to be able to announce an improvement in the health of the Twelfth regiment since I wrote you last. The existence of some sixty cases of pneumonia and typhoid fever, of which eight proved fatal in quick succession, alarmed us all at one time. But a change has taken place for the better,—due, apparently, to the increased care and precautions taken for the health of the men, for the weather has continued as trying as heretofore. We had snow and sharp cold weather yesterday and last night, and have a drizzling rain to-day There have been no deaths within a week past; the number on the sick-list has decreased considerably, and the new cases of fever are of a milder type. The suddenness with which death gave the final discharge, in several of the fatal cases, was startling. In one case, the

*Shortly before the date of this letter the writer was permanently detailed for duty as aide-de-camp on the staff of the brigade commander.

man was taken sick one day, went into hospital the next, and died the next. In another, the poor fellow had just sent a message to his friends saying that he was pretty sick, but hoped he should get along with it, when he fell into a dreamy, wandering state, complained of the weight of his knapsack, and did not see how he *could* carry it across the river. Suddenly his breath stopped; the soldier was over the river, without his knapsack and never again to be troubled by its weight.

There is now, I believe, but one man in hospital who is considered dangerously ill; and a week of sunshine, such as we *must* have soon, will bring the regiment back to its usual average of health.

Colonel Blunt, as brigade commander, has been making his presence felt at Fairfax Station in the right way The Station is a point of supply for all the troops at Centreville, Union Mills, Fairfax Court House, Fairfax Station and Wolf Run Shoals. The quantity of quartermaster and commissary stores here, is of course very large —and the position is to be held at all hazards. It is now, I am happy to say, in a very much better condition for defence than ever before. Rifle pits

have been dug and breast-works by the mile thrown up, by the men of the Fourteenth, Fifteenth and Sixteenth regiments, along the high ground surrounding the Station on every side, from behind which they will be happy to meet any force likely to be sent against them. The picket lines have also been closely looked after; the various departments of supply for the brigade have received attention; and the brigade and regimental hospitals have had the benefit of the colonel's occasional unannounced presence and quick eye for defects in management. One learns to value energy and attention to his business in a commanding officer, after seeing how the influence of such qualities is felt throughout down to the last private in the brigade.

How long the rebels will leave our infantry regiments unmolested, of course I cannot say; but the way in which our cavalry suffer of late, is a caution to us all. You have heard of the recent capture of Major Wells, a captain, two lieutenants and twenty men of the Vermont cavalry at Herndon Station, Va., some twenty miles north of this place. This was followed up night before last by the gobbling up of a picket reserve of the Pennsylvania cavalry, numbering some

twenty men, a short distance to the right of our own picket line on the Occoquan. These surprises of the cavalry, I must say, are getting to be altogether too frequent.

I have, by the way, recently met one or two of the men who were present at the capture of our Vermont cavalry at Aldie, two or three weeks since. Captain Huntoon's party were thrown off from their guard by a body of the Eighteenth Pennsylvania cavalry which met them on its way in from the outside, and reported no rebels anywhere in the region. The men were hemmed in by the rebels in the yard of a mill, from which they were getting grain to feed their horses. The force under Captain Mosby numbered, according to his own statement, twenty-seven men. Captain Woodward's horse was killed instantly by a ball in the spine and fell upon Captain Woodward, pinning him to the ground. While lying thus, a rebel ruffian rode up and commenced firing at the prostrate captain, who would probably have been murdered in cold blood had he not managed to draw a small pistol from his breast pocket, with which he was lucky enough to send a ball through his assailant's body One man of his company defended himself for some time from

two rebels who were trying to seize his horse, which he held by the halter, by striking at them with the bridle and bits. Gurtin, the Rutland boy who was so severely wounded, was seen to stop, with the balls flying around him and after two had gone *through* him, and deliberately load his revolver, which he had emptied, and discharge it at the rebels, after which he put spurs to his horse and made his escape. He now lies in the hospital at Fairfax Court House in a critical condition, a ball having passed through the bone of the pelvis into the groin, where it cannot be extracted.

Several of the men who were captured with General Stoughton and accompanied him to Richmond, have been paroled and have returned. They say that they were taken to Culpeper that night and the next morning, and remained there over one day, a delay which might have ensured the recapture of the prisoners, had a sufficient cavalry force followed upon their tracks. General Stoughton was well treated at Culpeper by General Fitzhugh Lee, who was a classmate of the general's at West Point; but after his arrival in Richmond he was taken to the Libby prison, where he now lies in company with 108 officers of

our army, who are all confined in one room. A lady acquaintance of the general's in Richmond had furnished him with some blankets; but he was kept on the same scanty fare as that allowed to the other prisoners—a third of a loaf of bread and a small piece of poor meat *per diem*. The general and his friends are hoping for his speedy release on parole.*

Yours, B.

XXV

HEADQUARTERS SECOND VERMONT BRIGADE,
WOLF RUN SHOALS, Va.,
April 9, 1863.

Dear Free Press :

If I sometimes talk about the weather it is because it is a subject of prime importance in every camp. Upon the weather depend both the movements of armies and the health of the troops, to an extent which can hardly be realized by any one not connected with the army The risks the soldier thinks most about

*General Stoughton's appointment as brigadier general, then pending confirmation by the U. S. Senate, was withdrawn by President Lincoln. This left him without rank in the army. He was paroled, retired to private life, and did not return to the service.

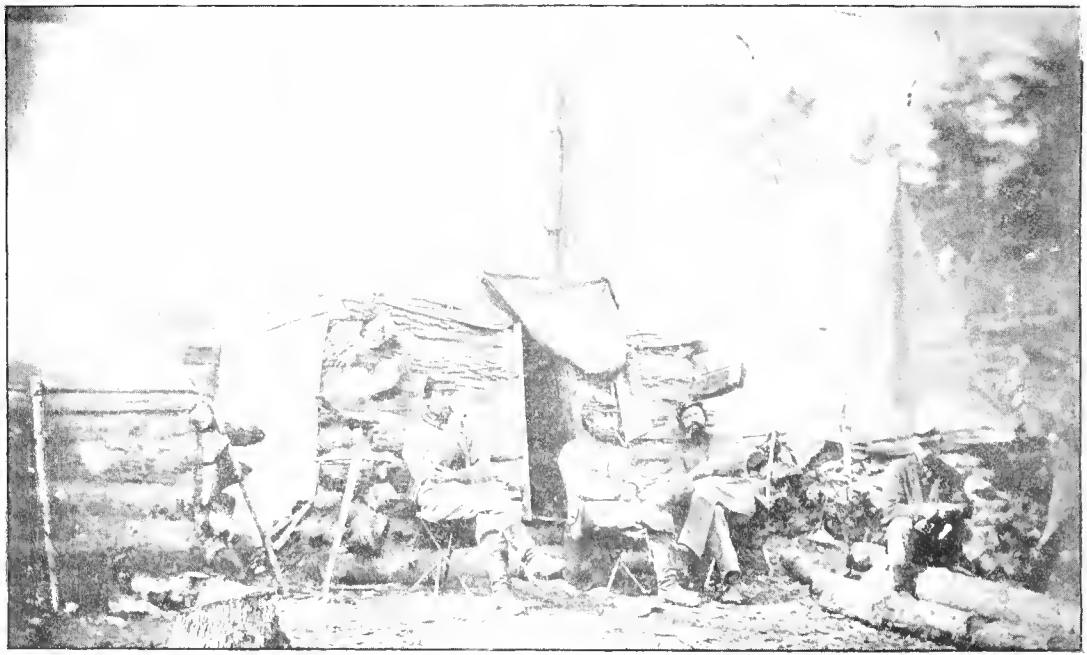
when he first enlists, are commonly those of the battlefield. After he has been out a while, not wounds or death or capture, but *sickness*, is his great dread. As long as he is *well*, if he is a true man, he cares little about the rest. For a month past we have encouraged ourselves with the thought that the season of snows and mud was about over. The inhabitants hereabouts told us that they frequently commenced ploughing in February, and that such gardens as they have were always made or making by the middle of March. This may be so; but we have no evidence of the fact this year. If you could have heard the storm howl here last Saturday night, or seen the pickets wading to their posts next day through snow which frequently in the hollows was over boot tops, you would have come to the conclusion that winter was not "rotting in the sky" in Virginia. To-day the snow still lies upon the shaded hill-slopes, and the air is as chilly, in spite of the sunshine, as in any April day in Vermont. We have now done counting on the speedy return of mild and pleasant weather. It may come, when it pleases the kind Ruler of the sunshine and the storm ; but our boys declare that they shall not be surprised to leave Virginia

in a snow storm when our time is out next July

The sick list of the Twelfth is larger now than ever before, numbering not less than 120, besides a number who suffer from severe colds but are not sick enough to require the surgeon's care. This diminution from the effective force of the regiment, while the details for picket duty are increased rather than diminished, tells sensibly upon the labors of the well and strong. But while there is some complaining, of course, all are ready to own that they had far rather do the work of the sick and feeble ones, than to take their places in the hospitals. There have been one or two more deaths since I wrote you last. The Twelfth, heretofore the healthiest, seems to be now the sickliest regiment in the brigade. Why this is so, it is hard to explain. Partly, perhaps, because the other regiments had their "sick spells" and got through the process of acclimation sooner; partly because the measles had a run in the winter and left many men in poor condition to resist the exposures of the spring; partly, perhaps mainly, owing to the unhealthy location of the camp. The last reason will not hold after this. This week the regiment has moved camp to a hard-wood knoll, a quarter of a mile from the

old one. The location is higher and the ground much better than the old one. The men erected new stockades before they left the old ones, and when the mud dries will be very comfortable in their new quarters. I wish you could look into some of the new shanties, and see *how* comfortable. I have one of Company C's in my eye—stockade of logs, split in halves, laid flat side in and hewed smooth, a good five feet high and closely covered by the canvas roof; door of boards in one side; good floor of pieces of hard tack boxes; bunks wide enough for two men, one over the other, made of smooth poles which make a spring bedstead; sheet iron stove; sofa of split white wood, without ends or back; gun rack filled with its shining arms—the principal ornament of the room; shelves, pegs to hang things on, and other conveniences too numerous to mention—why, it is good enough for the honeymoon palace of the Princess and Prince of Wales, good enough even for a soldier of the Army of the Union.

This brigade is now picketing twenty odd miles of line. The Fourteenth guards the lower Occoquan from the lowest ford at Colchester to Davis's Ford, three miles below the Shoals. The Twelfth



STOCKADED TENTS, 12TH REGIMENT, VT VOLS.

and Thirteenth picket from there to Yates's Ford, a couple of miles below Union Mills. The Fifteenth and Sixteenth take care of the rest of the line up to Blackburn's Ford, on Bull Run, where the pickets of General Hays' brigade meet our own.

The men of the Twelfth have been gratified by the recent removal of the headquarters of the brigade to the vicinity of the Shoals, thus bringing Colonel Blunt in a measure back to them, and the colonel is as glad to be near his regiment as they are to have him here.

Our pickets have been repeatedly fired on at night of late by bushwhackers. The consequence is stricter measures with the inhabitants within and near our lines. Brigade Provost Marshal, Captain William Munson, has been visiting all the houses in this region, searching for and confiscating all arms and property contraband of war, and registering the names and standing as to loyalty, of the citizens. It goes hard with some of these F. F. V's, to give up the old fowling pieces, of which quite a collection is accumulating at headquarters, some of them nearly as long as Long Bridge, and old as the invention of gunpowder apparently, which have been handed

down from father to son for generations; but they have to come.

It is one of the most embarrassing portions of the duty of a commanding officer in such a region as this, to deal properly with the non-combatant inhabitants. The innocent must often suffer with the guilty, from the nature of the case. Colonel Blunt is kind to the sincerely loyal, of whom there are *very* few, and to the inoffensive, of whom there are more, within our lines, and is looked up to by them as a protector; but the men whose influence contributed to bring about the present state of things, whose sons are in the rebel army, and whose sympathies are with that side, get little consolation when they come to Colonel Blunt to complain. They are informed that as they *would have* secession and war, and have sown the wind, they must take the consequences and reap the whirlwind. Such dialogues as the following are not infrequent: *Citizen*, "Good morning, Colonel," *Colonel*, "Good morning, sir."—*Citizen*, "My name is ———; your troops are stealing my rails; I'd like to save what I've got left, and wish you'd order them that ain't burnt brought back, and stop them taking any more." *Colonel*, "H'm, did you vote for

secession?" *Citizen*, "Well," (hesitating,) "Well I did, colonel, but it is too late to talk about that now" *Colonel*, "Too late to talk about rails, too, sir. Good day, sir." Exit citizen with a large flea in his ear and rage in his heart at "the d——d Yankees."

But to return to the provost marshal's operations, I was going to say that enough of information and arms have been obtained to fully warrant the search. Muskets have been found hid in the closets, and cartridges and percussion caps by thousands laid away in the women's bureau drawers, the possession of which they relinquished with extreme reluctance. Some citizens have been sent in to Washington for safe custody, and it is hoped that this playing peaceful citizen by day and bushwhacker by night is measureably stopped, for the present. Captain Munson has performed his delicate duties, so far as I can learn, with great good judgment and efficiency

We turn back now from our lines remorselessly all fugitives from Dixie, except contrabands and deserters from the rebel army Three of them came in to-day, one of them a young man of 25, the other two good looking boys of 17, all of the Fifth Virginia cavalry They are clothed in the

coarse cotton and wool butternut colored jackets and trousers which commonly form the uniform of a rebel soldier when he has one; and tell the often repeated story of scanty rations, hard treatment, and poor pay The twelve dollars a month which they are paid barely cover the cost of their clothes, at the rates at which they are charged to them, so that the rebel soldier in fact works for his food and clothing, and not over much of either. One of these was a Baltimore boy who joined the rebel army in a hurry, on its invasion of Maryland seven months ago, and has repented at his leisure. They brought their carbines with them, and tell straight stories. They say that an impression that the war is to continue indefinitely prevails now in the South, and is disheartening many who have hitherto held out strongly for the rebel cause.

This being fast day in Vermont, a general order from the colonel commanding directed the relief of the men from all unnecessary duties, and the observance of religious exercises appropriate to the occasion. The unsettled state of the camp of the Twelfth prevented our chaplain from preaching a sermon. I attended divine service in the camp of the Fourteenth and heard a patriotic

and excellent sermon by Chaplain Smart of that regiment. Yours, B.

XXVI.

HEADQUARTERS SECOND VT. BRIGADE,
UNION MILLS, VA.,
April 26, 1863.

Dear Free Press :

It is more than two weeks now since orders came for the Second brigade to be in readiness to take the field ; but we still linger on the banks of the muddy Occoquan. The order to make ready was promptly complied with. The extra baggage of the officers (wives included in some cases), was sent in to Alexandria or Washington; the tents were turned back to the quartermasters; the men overhauled their "cotton bureaus" and discarded superfluities with Spartan rigor; and the feeble men were sent into the city hospitals. Over a hundred men were thus sent in from this regiment, of whom many would probably be now on duty if they had stayed in camp, and many others in a very few days more, who will now have to go through the circumlocution office of

the hospitals and convalescent camp; and some will hardly more than rejoin the regiment, if at all, before their term of service will be out. But the orders of the medical authorities were peremptory. The brigade was to be "cleared for action," and it was done. We have been ready to sail in, any day since, but the order to move does not come. We trust that we are not to be kept here any longer, in the doubtless important, but inactive and inglorious duty of the defence of Washington. We have "stood guard" long enough. If there is anything to be *done*, and they will only allow us to have a hand in it before our time expires, it is all the favor we ask of our military rulers.

The ranks of Company C have been sadly depleted by the prevailing maladies. The company and the cause have lost two good soldiers, in the deaths of Corporal Pope and Private Sutton. I fear that more are to follow them. Some dry and warm weather, however, such as I trust we are about to have, will do wonders for the health of the command.

Brigadier General Stannard arrived last week, and assumed command. He is right welcome to the brigade, for the soldiers know his sterling

GEORGE J. STANNARD,

BREVET MAJOR-GENERAL U. S. V.

qualities, and to none more so than to the Twelfth to whom his coming restores their colonel.

The paymaster is paying the brigade four months' pay

Yours, B.

XXVII.

Skirmish at Warrenton Junction.

Headquarters Second Vt. Brigade,
Union Mills, Va., May 4, 1863.

Dear Free Press

On Friday morning last, the Twelfth broke camp and moved toward the front. The orders from division headquarters called for a regiment to go out to Warrenton Junction, for the protection of the O. & A. railroad, which has lately been re-opened to the Rappahannock and is soon to be again an important channel of supplies for the army, and the Twelfth was selected for the duty Officers and men were glad enough to leave Wolf Run Shoals, and to go where there was a prospect of more active service, and took up the line of march in high spirits. The regi-

ment reached Union Mills at about 11 o'clock, and there took cars for Warrenton Junction. It now lies in camp about three miles beyond Warrenton Junction, two companies being stationed at Catlett's Station.

I paid them a visit yesterday Taking a seat on the engine of a supply train, in company with Colonel Blunt and several other officers, we whirled away We soon reached the historic ground of Manassas, its plains seamed with rifle-pits and its low hills crowned with earth-works. Thence to Catlett's our iron horse picked his way over rails which were torn up by the rebels last summer, and have since been straightened after a fashion and relaid, and along a track which is strewn on each side with car trucks by the hundred and other burnt and blackened remains of the trains destroyed by General Banks, and by the rebels in the famous raid on General Pope's headquarters before the last Bull Run battles. The country from Bristow's on to Warrenton Junction and beyond, is a fine, open and comparatively level region, in strong contrast with the barren hills along the Occoquan, the scattered planters' houses showing evidences of more prosperity and the fields under cultivation to a

greater extent than in any portion of Virginia where we have heretofore been stationed.

Near Bristow's we were stopped by a frightened telegraph operator, on horseback, who said he had just escaped from Warrenton Junction, which place he reported in the hands of the rebel cavalry, who according to his account had come in and captured the whole force of Union cavalry there. We heard his story and pushed on to Catlett's, where we learned a different one, and hastening to Warrenton Junction we soon had the evidence of our own eyes upon the case. A body of cavalry, in the blue uniforms of Uncle Sam's boys, held the Junction, and the bodies of a dozen dead horses strewn around the solitary house at the station told of a sharp skirmish on that spot. Springing from the train, I had hardly taken twenty steps before I came upon the body of a dead rebel, stretched stark and cold, face upward, in coat of rusty brown and pantaloons of butternut. They showed me papers taken from his pockets, showing him to be one Templeman, a well known scout and spy of Mosby's command. Passing on to the house I found lying around it seventeen wounded "butternuts" of all ages, from boys of sixteen to shaggy and grizzled men

of fifty years. They lay in their blood, with wounds as yet undressed, for the skirmish ended but a little while before we arrived, some with gaping sabre cuts, some with terrible bullet wounds through face, body or limbs. Four or five rebel prisoners, unhurt, stood by, with downcast faces, but willing to answer civil questions. Close by, covered decently with a blanket, lay the body of a Union cavalryman, shot in cold blood after he had surrendered and given up his arms, by a long haired young rebel, who had received his reward for the dastardly act and lay near his victim, with a bullet wound in his stomach. The floor of the house was strewn with wounded men, among them Major Steele of the First Virginia, mortally wounded, and two of Mosby's officers. Their wounds had just been dressed, and the surgeons now began to give attention to the wounded rebels outside.

From men engaged on both sides, I learned that Mosby, who has recently been made a major for his activity in the rebel service, with 125 men,* made a dash upon the outpost of the First Virginia (union) cavalry, at the Junction, about 9 o'clock that morning. The men of the First

*Mosby in his Reminiscences says he had "70 or 80 men."

Virginia were taken by surprise, dismounted and with their horses unsaddled, and after a short fight surrendered. A few who had taken refuge in the station house kept up the fight by firing from the upper windows, till Mosby filled the house with smoke by setting fire to a pile of hay on the lower floor, when they hung out a white flag. They accounted for their surprise by averring that the front rank of the rebels were clothed in U S. uniform, and they supposed them to be a friendly force.

Major Mosby was, however, a little too fast for once. A squadron of the Fifth New York cavalry, under Major Hammond, happened to be in camp in a piece of woods near by, and making their appearance on the scene while the rebels were securing their prisoners, charged in on them at once. A running fight followed in which the prisoners were all retaken and twenty-three of their captors killed, wounded and made prisoners. Mosby was chased for ten miles, his force for the most part scattered, himself, as it is reported, wounded in the shoulder, and a number of his men wounded who made out to get into the woods and escape capture. The First Virginia lost their major, mortally wounded, one man

killed and nine men wounded, and the Fifth New York a captain and two lieutenants wounded. The result of the operation was, you see, altogether in our favor. Three men of the Twelfth Vermont were taken near the camp, by Mosby's men, but escaped in the skirmish, one of them bringing in a rebel's horse with him. The pickets of the Twelfth took a straggler from Mosby's force. A party of the First Vermont cavalry, which is in camp just beyond the Twelfth, joined the pursuit of the rebels but was not in at the skirmish.

Going on to the camp of the Twelfth Vermont I found the men considerably stirred up by the events of the morning which took place so nearly under their noses, and feeling as if they were pretty well out into the enemy's country; but if attacked I know that the Twelfth will give a good account of itself.

The health of the regiment is improving. Company C has lost another man in the death of Private Stoughton. He was apparently one of our hardiest men, enduring exposures which many men would sink under, and besides doing his own full share of duty often did that of other men, being always ready to take the place of an

ailing comrade. He ran right down with pneumonia, gave up all hope from the start, and gave his life to his country without a murmur.

We are waiting with intense anxiety for news from General Hooker's army

The season here is little or no earlier than in Vermont. The fields are just beginning to look green and the leaves of the forest trees are not yet started.

The brigade has orders to be ready to march at an hour's notice. We look for lively work here if disaster overtakes Hooker.

May 6.

The regiment is ordered forward to Rappahannock Station, to guard the railroad bridge at that point. Yours, B.

XXVIII.

SPRING-TIME IN VIRGINIA—GUARDING THE O. AND A. RAILROAD.

HEADQUARTERS SECOND VT BRIGADE,
UNION MILLS, VIRGINIA,
May 19, 1863.

Dear Free Press

Two weeks of sunshine and warm rains have brought forward the season in this region with

wonderful rapidity The fields are now green; the forest leaves have fairly jumped out of the branches that remained brown and bare till we began to doubt the existence of the slumbering life within; the patches of hard wood fleck with paler green the dark pine forests on the hill-slopes; the oak groves are delightful for shade and shelter; the white blossoms of the dogwood adorn the undergrowth; the song-birds are numerous in kind and quantity; and meadow and woodland are passing pleasant to every sense save that of taste, and *that* may be included if one chooses to pull up a root of sassafras, which is abundant in the woods. The charms of spring, heretofore alluded to, if I am not mistaken, by several writers both in prose and poetry, are appreciated by none more than by the soldiers. The spring-time gives carpet and canopy and hangings of green to their "truly rural" dwellings, and their life in the open air has many an agreeable feature.

The men of the Twelfth have been enjoying to the full their sojourn in the splendid region at the front, and the regiment has been greatly benefited as to health by the change. The number of new cases of sickness has been reduced to a

nominal figure, and the convalescents who have returned from the hospitals in Alexandria have rapidly regained full strength.

In the Thirteenth regiment the same malarial fever which weakened the Twelfth so at the Shoals is prevailing extensively and has proved fatal in four or five cases within a day or two.

The Twelfth regiment, when first sent to the Rappahannock on the 7th inst., was encamped near the river, but was afterwards drawn back for a mile—continuing, however, its guard at the bridge and pickets on the river—to a splendid stretch of meadow land in the edge of an oak grove. No finer location could have been asked for, and the boys would have been well content to remain there though the situation was an exposed one. It was as far to the front, you see, as General Hooker's army, and the two regiments—the Fifteenth lying about three miles this side of it,—were some twenty miles from supports. Rebel scouting parties were seen daily, and there was a line of rebel pickets on the other side of the river opposite the camp. If the enemy had made a serious attempt to repossess the Orange and Alexandria railroad by a flank movement from the mountain passes through

which Jackson came down on Pope, the Twelfth and Fifteenth would have had to fight it out alone. But that danger has passed. Two or three days since, a strong force of cavalry from Stoneman's corps came up to guard the lower end of the railroad, and yesterday the infantry regiments were withdrawn.

The Fifteenth came back to Union Mills, and resumes its old duty of picketing along the Occoquan and Bull Run. The Twelfth remains out a few miles, the right wing, which includes Company C, being stationed at Bristow's, and the left wing, in two detachments, at Catlett's Station and Manassas Junction.

I should like to describe more fully than I have done the region between us and the Rappahannock, its melancholy desolation, deserted mansions, farms without a laborer or sign of cultivation, and solitary chimney stacks, the only vestiges of hundreds of farm houses swept away by the scourge of war, while the few remaining inhabitants have reached a point where the owners of plantations of two or three thousand acres are glad to beg from our troops the common necessaries of life ; but I have not time to-day.

General Stannard retains his headquarters at Union Mills, and devotes himself earnestly and effectively to the care of the troops. It is no light care. The Second Vermont brigade is spread over a line of fifty miles, three of the regiments maintaining a picket line for which the entire brigade used to be hardly sufficient, and two guarding thirty miles of railroad, for the protection of which, a year ago, a force of *sixteen thousand* men was not considered too large, although then there was no rebel army this side of Richmond. If any one supposes that under such circumstances there is no work for the men, or labor and care for their officers, he has only to come out here to learn his mistake. But as yet we see no fighting. We heard the roar of the recent battles at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, in which our brothers were winning good report though not victory, and wished we were by their sides. There is time yet to try our men under fire. If Hooker is further reinforced from this corps, we shall probably be sent to him ; and it is not impossible that we may have all the fighting we want right here ; but it must come within six weeks or not at all for us, in this term of service.

Yours, B.

XXIX.

A Visit to the Battle-field of Bull Run.

Headquarters Second Vt. Brigade,
Union Mills, Va., June 15, 1863.

Dear Free Press:

The theatre of active conflict has been approaching us sensibly of late. The battle of last Tuesday* took place near Rappahannock Bridge and Beverly's Ford, where the Twelfth Vermont was stationed but a few days ago. Since then the outposts of Hooker's army and of this brigade, have been in daily contact. This morning we see the dust and hear the distant drums of two army corps, moving back to this line. The impression is general that the next big fight may take place in this vicinity, perhaps rendering *thrice* memorable the historic ground of the two great Bull Run battles.

I visited that battle ground on Saturday last. The troops of our brigade have long guarded Blackburn's Ford and have picketed upon the outskirts of the ground; but the actual battle field has been outside of our lines, and traversed so frequently by rebel scouting parties, that

* The cavalry engagement of Brandy Station.

it has not been safe to visit it except with a party of strength enough to take care of any squad of "bushwhackers" or Mosby's rangers.

For our excursion we had Col. Blunt, Lieut. Col. Farnham, Major Kingsley, Captains Ormsbee and Paul, Adjutant Vaughan, Lieut. Cloyes, Drum-Major Downer, and Hospital Steward Hard, of the Twelfth; Col. Randall and Surgeon Nichols of the Thirteenth; Adjutant Peabody, Quartermaster Henry, and several other officers of the Sixteenth; Medical Director Ketchum; Quartermaster Brownson, Lieut. Prentiss, Lieut. Thompson and your humble servant of Gen. Stannard's staff; and orderlies and attendants enough to make a cavalcade of twenty-five. It was a party whose capture would have made something of a hole in the Second Vermont brigade, but we saw no armed enemy.

Starting from Union Mills we crossed Bull Run at McLean's Ford, and struck off towards the battle field, some five or six miles thence in a direct line; but following the windings of the interminable bridle paths which intersect every piece of forest and traverse every valley and field with a network, we made a longer distance of it. For a while we kept near the bank of the Run, edged

with trench and breastwork for mile after mile on the southern side. These were Beauregard's works, and well constructed, as the rebel works generally are in this region. Leaving these we came out in time to a more open country, and Col. Randall and Adjutant Peabody, who were members of the old Vermont Second, at once recognized the neighborhood of their first battle. Soon we were on the spot where Rickett's battery was taken. The ruins of the Henry house, around which the battle raged and in which a woman was killed, were near us. The rose bushes still grow in the rank grass which covers what was once the door-yard or flower-garden, and blossom as freely as if the storm of battle had never swept over them. A grave, protected by some rails thrown around it, near the ruined chimney stack, we conjectured to be possibly the resting place of the hapless occupant, whose fate gave her a place in the history of the first great battle of the great War for the Union. The grave of Lieut. Ramsay, and the spot where Col. Bartow, of Georgia, fell —once marked by a small marble monument, which for some reason was removed to Manassas Junction by the rebels last summer—are also right there. Plucking some roses to be pressed

and sent home as mementoes of the battle ground, we passed on over the field. Guided by Col. Randall we saw where the fighting opened on the right and centre ; where the Second Vermont, then a regiment a month old, first went into action ; where it did its fighting ; where, upon the attack of fresh forces upon our right, it was ordered to fall back ; and where its dead were collected and buried. Many of the dead who fell in both the battles of Bull Run, were not buried in graves but simply covered with earth as they lay, and skulls and bones frequently protrude from the little mounds; but the Vermonters seemed to have been decently interred in a row. There are no head-boards to mark the graves, and the grass grows thick over them. We passed by Dogan's house, still standing though unoccupied; we saw, of course, "the stone house," windowless and deserted and marked by cannon shot ; and we took our homeward way by the turnpike, fording Bull Run at the famous stone bridge, now a bridge no longer.

On the battle-ground I saw not a trace of rifle-pit or earth-work of any description, and the fighting must have been in the main open stand-up work. The ground is almost covered in one

or two spots with skeletons of horses. Its surface is ridged with graves, and strewn with cartridge boxes, remnants of uniforms and knapsacks, and here and there a rusty bayonet or unexploded shell. Many of the marks of the conflict are doubtless hidden by the grass, which grows probably thicker than before on soil enriched by the blood and bones of fallen patriots and rebels. It is now entirely uncultivated and deserted; but several of the farms around and near it are in a pretty good state of cultivation for Virginia, and in time, no doubt, the plough-share will be driven over its slopes, through grave and cannon rut, and all traces of the great battles will become obliterated.

We returned to camp, after a ride taken all together of from 20 to 25 miles, without casualties.

The weather is dry to actual drought. It is over a month since we have had more than a passing shower. The days are generally clear and hot and the nights uniformly cool. It is good weather for the health of our troops.

The regiments have been taking turns, of late, at out-post duty at Bristow's and Catlett's. The Twelfth was drawn back to Union Mills a fort-

night since, and remains here. The Sixteenth succeeded it out on the railroad, and was succeeded in turn by the Fifteenth.

You understand, of course, that if I have heretofore mainly written of the Twelfth, it is because many of your readers are especially interested in it, and because it is my own regiment, and not because the others are not as well worthy of notice. All are good regiments. The Thirteenth, Col. Randall, I have not seen in line lately, but I hear that it is in a fine state of efficiency and drill. The Fourteenth, Col. Nichols, I saw on review recently, and admired the precision with which they marched and the general good appearance of the men. The Fifteenth and Sixteenth, Colonels Proctor and Veazey, were reviewed here a while since, by Gen. Abercrombie, commanding the division, who expressed surprise and gratification at their fine discipline and appearance. The following order is official testimony to this:

HEADQUARTERS SECOND BRIGADE,
ABERCROMBIE'S DIVISION,
UNION MILLS, Va., May 26th, 1863.

SPECIAL ORDER NO. 19.

The General Commanding desires to express to the regiments inspected to-day his congratula-

tions on their soldierlike appearance, and to convey to them the approbation of the Division General.

Gen. Abercrombie speaks in high terms of the Review and Inspection, especially of the manner in which both regiments passed through the manual of arms, and noticed with pleasure the attention that has been paid to drill and discipline by both officers and men.

By order of BRIG. GEN. G. J STANNARD,
WM. H. HILL, A. A. G.

It will not be a satisfactory sight, in some aspects of it, to see these fine regiments, each over 800 strong to-day, going home at this critical period of the war. But half of the men, and perhaps more, will re-enlist before the summer is over. Yours, B.

XXX.

The Battle of Gettysburg — Personal Observations and Experiences.

Headquarters Second Vt. Brigade,
Battlefield of Gettysburg,
July 4, 1863.

Dear Free Press:

The scene has shifted since I wrote you last from the shores of the Occoquan to the fields of Pennsylvania, from pleasant camp life to scenes of battle and frightful bloodshed. My last letter was hardly closed when we got the exciting news that Lee's army was in full march to the north, through the Shenandoah Valley, and that the Army of the Potomac was on its way north to protect the National Capital—news soon confirmed by the appearance of troops of contrabands and long columns of the cavalry and infantry of three army corps, with forty batteries of the reserve artillery, which came streaming past for four days and as many nights.

On the 23d of June General Stannard received notice that his brigade had been attached to the Third division of the First Army Corps; that it

was to hold the line of the Occoquan till the main army had passed, and then was to follow the corps and join it if possible before the great battle which was expected. On the 25th ult. the brigade started. I was sent to Washington that day by General Stannard, on special duty, and did not overtake the brigade till it had passed into Maryland. The march to Gettysburg lasted a week—seven weary days of continuous marching through the mud. Our men, you know, were not inured to marching. Some were poorly shod, for in view of the speedy termination of their service they had not been allowed to exchange old shoes for new ; but they marched well. With sore and blistered and often bleeding feet, in some cases barefooted, they pushed along and made their twenty miles, or nearly that, a day, and gained nearly a day's march on the First corps, before it joined it on the battlefield.

I spent the night of the 28th in Frederick City, which was full of soldiers, and considered myself fortunate to get a cot to sleep on in a private house, where next morning I met Charles Carleton Coffin and Mr. Crounse, the army correspondents of the *Boston Journal* and *N. Y*

Times, who directed me to the headquarters of the army, just outside the city. Thither I hurried in a drizzling rain to find Colonel Edward R. Platt, of General Hooker's staff, who, being a Vermonter I thought would know where I could find the Second Vermont brigade. As I reached headquarters, I met General Hooker with several officers of his staff, riding away As he returned my salute, I noticed the expression upon his striking features, and said to myself: "Something is going wrong with Hooker; he is not happy" Later I learned that he had been relieved; had just turned over the command to General Meade, and was then taking his final departure from army headquarters. Getting directions on what road to follow the First corps; and being lucky enough to hire a horse of a farmer, who accompanied me on horseback to make sure of the return of his beast, I pushed to the north, overhauled the brigade about noon, and was glad to join General Stannard at the head of the column, and to exchange the Marylander's gray mare for my own horse.

The next afternoon I was sent forward by General Stannard with a report to General John B. Reynolds, commanding the First corps. To

reach his headquarters involved a ride of ten miles in the strong current of the Army of the Potomac, moving to the north. The march of an army of a hundred thousand men is an imposing spectacle, though the uniforms be dusty and the marchers footsore. All the roads and avenues throughout a wide stretch of country were thronged with artillery and army wagons; the newly-made but already bare and hard-trodden pathways along the roadsides were filled with troops ; the very landscape seemed to move with the movement of armed men.

It was after sundown when I reached the head of the column of the corps, then halted for the night. I found General Reynolds at a little country tavern, about five miles from Gettysburg. He was resting from the fatigue of the day, his tall form stretched at full length upon a wooden settle. He received my report without rising, and scarcely raising his head from his arms, folded under it, made some inquiries in regard to the strength of the Vermont brigade, sent back a message to General Stannard, and remarked that he was glad to have the brigade join the corps, for he thought all the men they could get might be needed before many hours. This was my first

and last sight of this brave and able general. Next morning he was beyond the need of men or mortal help, with a confederate bullet in his brain.

When I returned to the brigade, bivouacking near Emmittsburg, the word was running through the ranks that 30,000 rebs were in Cashtown, Pa., twelve miles away Lee, then, had turned back from Harrisburg. The armies were converging. How long before they would meet in mortal struggle?

The first news that the great battle we were expecting had begun reached us about noon of Wednesday, July 1, when a courier, spurring a tired horse, met General Stannard riding at the head of his brigade, eight or nine miles south of Gettysburg, with word from General Doubleday that a big fight was in progress at Gettysburg; that General Reynolds had been killed and he had succeeded to the command of the First corps; that the corps and cavalry were fighting a large part of the rebel army and having hard work to hold their ground, and that Stannard must hasten forward as fast as possible.

He did so, but the heat was oppressive, the men were tired, and they moved all too wearily till

crossing a crest four or five miles from the field, the heavy roar of cannon in front reached all ears. The sound put life into the men, and there was no lagging after that. As we neared Gettysburg we began to see groups of excited inhabitants, most of them women, gathered wherever there was an outlook toward the field. Their anxious faces were bent upon us with varied expressions, some seeming by their sad gaze to say, "Alas, that these too should be food for powder," while the eyes of others, as they glanced down the long column of the brigade which had more men in it than some divisions, lighted with hope, and they waved us on as to certain victory

The smoke of the battle was now mounting high over the field, and the "sultry thunder" of artillery, rolling continuously and heavily, filled the air. About sundown, as the brigade reached the outskirts of the field, I was again sent forward to report its arrival to the division commander and was thus the first man of the brigade to reach the actual battle ground.

The artillery firing had ceased, but carbines were cracking on the plain as I rode across it. Passing inside of a skirmish line of dismounted

cavalry I took my way to a low hill, which seemed to be the centre of operations. Batteries were in position on the brow of the hill and troops forming along its top. They were what was left of the Eleventh corps, after its retreat through the village, rallying on a new line to meet an anticipated attack from the enemy, then apparently forming for an assault, at the foot of the hill. I rode up to a colonel who was directing the disposition of a line of battle. A white handkerchief was wound around his neck, through the folds of which blood was oozing from a wound in his throat. He directed me where he thought I could find a portion of the First corps, and I found Gen. Rowley, commanding the Third division of the corps, stretched on the ground by a little white house. He was asleep, overcome by fatigue, or something, and his aids would not wake him. They told me to guide the brigade to that point; and after a while, the tired men stretched themselves upon their arms in a wheat field, and sank into the deep and reckless sleep of the weary soldier. There was rest for the men; but not for our general. Gen. Stannard was appointed general field officer of the day, or of the night rather, in that part of the field, and had to see to

the posting of the pickets of another corps besides our own. The duty called for a night in the saddle, upon the army lines.

The second day of the battle opened on Thursday without firing, save now and then a shot from the pickets, but we saw considerable moving of troops on our side behind the low ridge which concealed us from the enemy, and doubtless the same process was going on, on their side, unseen by us. The batteries alone on the crests of the ridges menaced each other, like grim bulldogs, in silence.

The three regiments present of our brigade—the Twelfth having been held back and the Fifteenth sent back to guard the ammunition trains in the rear—were placed behind Cemetery Hill, a round hill crowned by a cemetery laid out with an amount of taste unusual in a place of the size of Gettysburg ; and General Stannard was notified that he was in command of the infantry supports of the batteries upon the left of the hill, and would be held responsible for their safety

Our batteries were planted, not actually upon the graves, but close to them within the cemetery —such are the necessities of war. Our regiments lay behind the hill through the forenoon, the

men lounging on the grass, till about 3 o'clock, when the ball opened by the whizzing of shell around our ears. The first thrown exploded over the Thirteenth regiment, and two or three men of it were wounded by the fragments. A sudden scampering to the rear of orderlies, ambulances, and all whose duties did not hold them to the spot, followed. The troops were moved a little closer under the hill and made to lie down; our own batteries opened sharply, and an artillery duel followed. The shells came screaming through the air with not altogether agreeable frequency, mingled, for those of us whose duties called us to the top of the hill, with the frequent humming of minie balls. Occasionally a battery horse would plunge and rear for a moment and then drop. As I passed one of the guns, I noticed a fine looking sergeant of the battery, watching eagerly the effect of the shot he had just aimed; as I came back again, two minutes later, he was lying dead by his gun. Men came by us from the skirmish line in front, with gun-shot wounds of arm or leg or head. A company was called for as support to the skirmishers. Captain Foster, of General Stannard's staff, was sent out to station them, and was brought back in a few

minutes shot through both legs. We were told by the old warriors that this thundering of cannon must be the prelude to a charge upon our lines, and all watched to see where it would come. About six, the nearing of musketry firing to our left indicated the spot, and in a few minutes we heard, above the din, the yell with which the rebels charge. There was scarce time to think what it meant, when orders came for our brigade to hurry to the left, where the lines were now being borne back by the enemy. Several regiments had broken for the rear; a battery had been taken, and our brigade was called for to fill the gap. Five companies of the Thirteenth, under Colonel Randall, led the advance on the double quick. The left wing of the regiment, under Lieut. Col. Munson, had been supporting a battery to the right and brought up the rear of the column. General Hancock was rallying the troops on the spot. "Can you retake that battery, Colonel?" was his question, as they came up. "Forward, boys," was the reply, and in they went. Captain Lonergan's company of "bould soldier boys" took the lead and rushed at the battery with their Irish yell. Colonel Randall's gray horse fell under him, shot through the shoulder,

and he went on, on foot. The guns were reached, wheeled round and passed to the rear, and pressing on, the boys of the Thirteenth took two rebel guns with some eighty odd of the "graybacks" who were supporting them. This ended the fighting for the night. The Thirteenth fell back to the main line, which, thus restored by the Vermonters, was held by our brigade to the close of the battle, at the point on the left centre at and around which the hardest fighting of the next day took place.

With the darkness the firing ceased, and we then heard from our front that sound which once heard will not be forgotten by any one—a low, steady, indescribable moan—the groans of the wounded, lying by thousands on the battle-field. As the moon was rising I rode out upon the field in front of our lines. My horse started aside at every rod from the bodies of dead men or horses; and wounded men, Union soldiers and rebels in about equal proportions, were making their way slowly within our lines. Some of the latter said that General Barksdale, of Mississippi, lay mortally wounded out beyond, and begged to be brought in. A party from the Fourteenth was sent to search for him, but he was not found till

near morning. I saw his body soon after the life had left it, next morning, and, having seen him on the floor of Congress, recognized it at once. He was dressed in a suit of the light-bluish-gray mixture of cotton and wool, worn commonly by the rebel officers, with gold lace upon the coat sleeves and down the seams of the trousers. His vest thrown open disclosed a ball hole through the breast, and his legs were bandaged and bloody from gunshots through both of them. He had fought without the wig which Speaker Grow once knocked off in the Hall of Representatives, and his bald head and broad face, with open unblinking eyes, lay uncovered in the sunshine. There he lay alone, without a comrade to brush the flies from his corpse.

Our men slept Thursday night upon their arms.

Returning to headquarters, simply a spot on the open field where the brigade headquarters flag was planted amid the lines of sleeping soldiers, I stretched myself, supperless—for our headquarters cooks and mess wagon disappeared when the artillery firing began that day, and were lost to sight, though to memory dear, throughout the rest of the battle—on the ground, but had got

only an hour's sleep when I was aroused by an orderly.

General Stannard, anticipating harder fighting on the morrow, wanted more cartridges for his men,and sent me to find the division ammunition train, supposed to be at or near Rock Creek Church, three or four miles away, and procure a supply Followed by a mounted orderly I went to the place, to find that the trains had been ordered back no one knew where; but that some First corps wagons, probably containing ammunition, had moved up near the field. I spent the rest of the night in search of these wagons, zigzagging around the field wherever I saw a camp fire or light. I stopped at a dozen or more of the great Pennsylvania barns, looking more like large factory buildings than like our New England barns. Each of them was a field hospital; its floor covered with mutilated soldiers, and surgeons busy at the lantern-lighted operating tables.

By the door of one of them was a ghastly pile of amputated arms and legs, and around each of them lay multitudes of wounded men, covering the ground by the acre, wrapped in their blankets and awaiting their turns under the knife. I

was stopped hundreds of times by wounded men, sometimes accompanied by a comrade but often wandering alone, to be asked in faint tones the way to the hospital of their division, till the accumulated sense of the bloodshed and suffering of the day became absolutely appalling. It seemed to me as if every square yard of the ground, for many square miles, must have its blood stain. After three or four hours of such fruitless wandering I gave up the search and started back for the brigade. The moon, now setting, had become obscured, and, lacking its guiding light and following a road which I supposed to be that over which I went to Rock Creek Church, but which was really, as I afterwards learned, the Baltimore pike, I found myself toward morning passing under a tall arch, beyond which stood two field pieces in the roadway

Everything was still around, but as I rode between the guns, a form rose from beside them, and a voice asked where I was going. I explained and was told that I would find nothing in that direction till I struck the rebel lines. The arch was the entrance gate to the cemetery ; and the rebel lines were near by at the base of the hill. I had completely lost my way, and but for the

warning of the artillery man I should now probably be on my way to Libby prison.

I reached brigade headquarters as day was breaking, and as the cannonade of Friday morning began. A shell struck near my feet without exploding, as I dismounted. A minute later another broke the leg of an orderly's horse ten feet away Still another took off the hoof of another horse, close by It was plain that the horses were drawing the enemy's fire, and they were removed beyond the ridge behind us. From that time on until the close of the battle, with one or two exceptions, we saw no horses or mounted men anywhere near where we were, except those of the batteries on that front.

The artillery fire was quite sharp for a while in the morning from the rebel batteries opposite us, but died away in an hour or so. It was perhaps intended to divert attention while the enemy was preparing a desperate attack upon our extreme right. Gen. Stannard adjusted a little the positions of his regiments. The Sixteenth was on the skirmish line in front. The Fourteenth was moved forward several rods to a line where some scattered trees and bushes afforded a partial cover. The Thirteenth was placed to the right and a little

to the rear of the Fourteenth. No troops were in front of us. The ground had been fought over the day before, and a number of the dead of both armies lay scattered upon it. Fearing that the sight of these bloody corpses might dishearten some of our men, I suggested to the general that it would be well to cover them with some of the blankets which lay about, and aided by an orderly I covered a number of the bodies where our men lay, the living and dead side by side. About six o'clock the musketry firing became tremendous about a mile to our right. We could see nothing of it but the white smoke rising above the tree tops; but the volleys rolled in one continuous crash for *six hours*. The sound did not recede or advance, and we inferred that each side held its ground.

While this was going on, Gen. Lee, as it turned out, was collecting his batteries behind the crest of the ridge over against us. The ground here is a broad open stretch of meadow land, sloping away from the ridge on which our batteries were placed, in front of which, further down the slope, our infantry lay in three lines of battle perhaps 50 yards apart, and then rising to a rounded ridge over against us,

from half to three-fourths of a mile away, which was held by the enemy. Our men improved the lull to make a little protection by collecting the rails which had been fences a day or two before, and piling them in a low breastwork perhaps two feet high. This would of course be a very slight protection for men standing; but for men lying prostrate they proved a valuable cover, and we found we needed every such assistance before night.

About one o'clock a couple of guns from the enemy gave the signal; from seventy-five to a hundred guns* were run out upon the ridge right over against us, and for an hour and a half, what old veterans pronounce the severest cannonade of the war was opened directly upon us. The air seemed to be literally filled with flying missiles. Shells whizzed and popped on every side. Spherical case exploded over our heads and rained iron bullets upon us; the Whitworth solid shot, easily distinguished by their clear musical ring, flew singing by; grape hurtled around us or rattled in an iron storm against the low protections of rails, and round shot ploughed up the ground before

*One hundred and fifty guns were employed by General Lee in this cannonade.

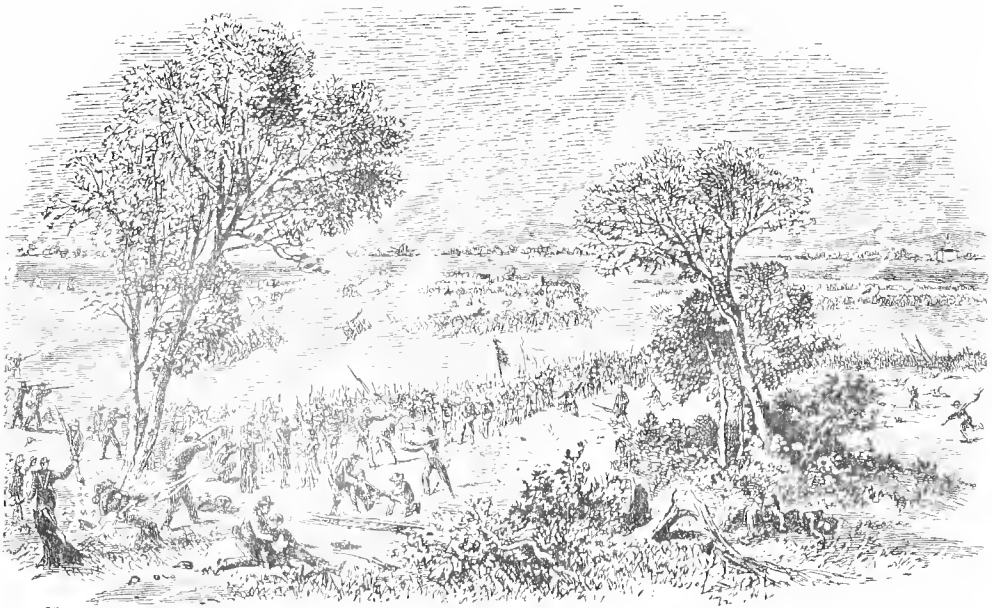
and behind us. The men needed no caution to hug the ground closely All lay motionless, heads to the front and faces to the ground. Though most of the shells went over us, occasionally a man would be struck. The wounded men invariably received their injuries without outcry, and lay and bled quietly in their places. They understood that for their comrades to attempt to remove them would be almost certain death, and waited patiently till the close of the fight should allow them to be cared for. The general and his staff alone stood erect or passed up and down the lines, and kept a close watch to the front for the first indication of the expected charge. Of course our batteries were not silent. They fired rapidly and well, but the enemy seemed to fire two guns to our one. Suddenly with a loud explosion a caisson of a battery just on our left blew up, struck by a solid shot. The smoke rolled up in a tall column, from under which the frightened horses, one or two minus a leg, dashed wildly to the rear. The rebels on the crest cheered to the sound, and poured in their shot still faster. Ten minutes later a whole battery seemed to blow up on our right. For a moment there was a scene of great confusion around it ;

but a fresh battery dashed up in its place, and our fire re-opened with fresh vigor from the spot. A minute afterwards a rebel caisson opposite us exploded, and it was our turn to cheer

About four o'clock, the shout, "There they come" from our watchful general, brought every man's arms into his hands, and many a man's heart to his mouth. Two long and heavy lines came over the opposite ridge and advanced upon us. Down they came to about half the distance between our lines and their batteries, when our Thirteenth and Fourteenth regiments were ordered up, and rose in a close and steady line. At the sight the rebel column seemed to halt for an instant, then turned at a right angle and marched across the front of our brigade, then turning again at a right angle, came in on the charge, a few rods to the right of our brigade. The troops holding the lines there met the rebels with a line of fire; but the gray masses still came on, with unearthly yells, led by an officer on horseback who rode back and forth waving a red battle flag and cheering on his men. They had nearly reached the Union bayonets, and it began to be a question how lines of battle but two men deep could stand the onset of a massed

column, when a new and unlooked for arrangement changed the appearance of things. The point of attack had no sooner become evident, than General Stannard ordered forward the Thirteenth and Sixteenth regiments to take the enemy on the flank. The Vermonters marched a few rods to the right, and then, changing front, swung out at right angles to the main line, close upon the flank of the charging column, and opened fire. This was more than the rebels had counted on. They began to break and scatter from the rear in less than five minutes, and in ten more it was an utter rout. A portion made their way back to their own side; but fully two-thirds, I should think, of their number, dropped their arms and came in as prisoners. Of course they suffered terribly in killed and wounded. The Fourteenth had kept up a constant fire upon them, and a line of dead bodies marked their line of march across its front, while where their column came in on the charge their dead literally strewed the ground.

It was a savage onset and a glorious repulse; but it did not end the fight on the left centre. Veazey and Randall and their men were occupied with the agreeable duty of receiving colonels'



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STANNARD'S BRIGADE OPENING ON PICKETT'S DIVISION,

Gettysburg, July 3d, 1863.

and majors' swords, when the order came to "about face" and meet another charge. A body of the enemy, evidently the supporting body of the main rebel column, was coming down to the left of us, apparently aiming at the position of the Fourteenth. The same mode of treatment was applied to their case, with the happiest result. The Fourteenth met them with a hot fire in front, and Colonel Veazey with the Sixteenth, hurrying back on the double quick, took them on the flank and bagged about a brigade of them.

The Sixteenth took in this charge the colors of the Second Florida—a beautiful silk flag inscribed with "Williamsburg" and "Seven Pines"— the colors of the Eighth Virginia, and the battle flag of another regiment, which was foolishly thrown away by the sergeant to whom it was given to carry, who pitched it into the bushes, declaring that he could not fight with that flag in his hands.

With these repulses of the enemy the big fight in effect closed. There was some skirmishing on our left, but no more hard fighting. At dark I was sent out with a detail of men, and stationed a picket line across the front of our brigade, and at 9 o'clock our Vermont regiments were relieved from their position in the front line and allowed

to find rest and comparative relief from care a little distance in the rear.

I cannot give the loss of the brigade, as the list of casualties has not yet been prepared. It cannot be much less than 300 killed and wounded.* The list of missing will be small. I did not at any time see a man of the brigade making for the rear.

The length of this hurried letter compels me to leave undescribed many an interesting incident of the fight, some of which I may perhaps describe in a future letter. One or two, however, must not be passed over.

Gen. Hancock was shot from his horse while he was talking to Gen. Stannard. I helped the latter to bandage Hancock's wound and his blood stained my hands. I might say *stains* my hands, for there has been no water to wash with, and not much to drink, where we have been on this field.

During the last sharp shower of grape and shell, with which the enemy strove to cover their retreat, Gen. Stannard was wounded in the right

* The official reports of the loss of the brigade showed 46 killed; 240 wounded; and 56 missing—total 342. The missing proved to be almost wholly men who had fallen out on the march to the battle-field, and came in before the brigade left the field. Of the wounded 19 died of their wounds.

leg by a shrapnel ball, which passed down for three inches into the muscle of the thigh. The wound was very painful until a surgeon came and removed the ball, but the general refused to leave the field, though urged to go by Gen. Doubleday He kept up till the regiments had marched back and till the wounded had been removed and then sank fainting on the ground and was taken to the rear.

He was about the coolest man I saw on the field, exposing himself in a way that would have been rashness, were it not for the need he felt of animating his men by his example. He was a constant mark for the enemy's sharp-shooters, but nothing daunted or disconcerted him. To his presence of mind and timely orders is largely due the glorious success of yesterday The general is proud of his troops and they of him ; and Vermont may well be proud of both.

The brigade, or the three regiments engaged, is still on the battlefield. We have no tents, no fires and nothing to cook if we had. The men stand or sit in knots near their stacked arms, worn, hungry and battlestained ; but a better feeling body of men one does not often see. The big battle is over; and every man is glad to have had a part in it. Yours, B.

XXXI.

Additional Details of Gettysburg—Close of the Service of the Brigade.

Camp of the Twelfth Vermont,
Brattleboro, Vt., July 14, 1863.

Dear Free Press:

If I recollect aright, my last letter, from the battle-field of Gettysburg, contained an intimation that in a subsequent epistle I might attempt to set down some additional incidents of the great battle. I take the first opportunity to fulfill the promise—finding it only here, ten days after the fight and many hundred miles from the field. As hitherto, I write only of what passed under my own eye, leaving to others the description of the battle as a whole.

As some of the army correspondents have given more or less erroneous accounts of the wounding of General Hancock, I will describe it as it happened. Just after General Stannard had ordered the Thirteenth and Sixteenth Vermont regiments out on Pickett's flank, General Hancock, followed by a single mounted orderly, rode down to speak to General Stannard. Lieutenant George W Hooker and myself were standing

near the general's side. The din of artillery and musketry was deafening at the time, and I did not hear the words that passed between the two generals. But my eyes were upon Hancock's striking figure—I thought him the most splendid looking man I ever saw on horseback, and magnificent in the flush and excitement of battle—when he uttered an exclamation and I saw that he was reeling in his saddle.

Hooker and I with a common impulse sprang toward him, and caught him as he toppled from his horse into our outstretched arms. General Stannard bent over him as we laid him upon the ground, and opening his clothing where he indicated by a movement of his hand that he was hurt, a ragged hole, an inch or more in diameter, from which the blood was pouring profusely, was disclosed in the upper part and on the inside of his thigh. He was naturally in some alarm for his life. "Don't let me bleed to death," he said, "Get something around it quick." Stannard had whipped out his handkerchief, and as I helped to pass it around General Hancock's leg, I saw that the blood, being of dark color and not coming in jets, could not be from an artery, and I said to him: "This is not arterial blood, Gen-

eral; you will not bleed to death." From my use of the surgical term he took me for a surgeon, and replied, with a sigh of relief: "That's good; thank you for that, Doctor." We tightened the ligature by twisting it with the barrel of a pistol, and soon stopped the flow of blood. Major Mitchell of Hancock's staff rode up as we were at work over the general, and uttering an exclamation of pain as he saw the condition of his chief, turned and darted away after a surgeon. One came in fifteen minutes, and removing the handkerchief thrust his forefinger to the knuckle into the wound and brought out from it an iron nail bent double. "This is what hit you, General," he said, holding up the nail, "and you are not so badly hurt as you think."*

*Four months after the battle I met Hancock in Willard's Hotel in Washington. He remembered my face and I spent an hour talking over the battle with him. He told me that though his wound soon healed externally, it gave him immense pain till, after a number of weeks, the surgeons opened it and probed it more thoroughly, when, eight inches from the opening, they found and extracted a minie ball and a round plug of wood. The explanation of this curious assortment of missiles to be taken from a single wound was a simple one. Hancock was nearly facing the enemy when hit. The ball passed first through the pommel of his McClellan saddle, took from it the nail and a round piece of wood the size of the ball, and carried both with it into his body. I may add that I possess and prize a note in General Hancock's peculiar handwriting, addressed to myself, in which he says: "I have reason to remember you and Colonel Hooker on that field, for to you I am indebted for your kindly aid in assisting me from my horse when I was struck and about to fall to the ground, and that incident is of course indelibly impressed upon my memory."

I was sent by General Stannard, about this time, with orders to the Vermont regiments then actively engaged in front, and did not return until the repulse of Pickett's division was complete. General Hancock was still lying where he fell. He had just sent a message to General Meade announcing the repulse of the great assault of the enemy, and was evidently more cheerful in mind than he had been half an hour before. I helped to lift him into an ambulance and saw him no more.

I wish I could describe the great cannonade of Friday afternoon, but it was simply indescribable. At one time, when it was at the hottest, I took out my watch and counted for a minute the shells that came so nearly in the line of my sight that I could see them like black spots in the air. I counted six such in sixty seconds. Most of these went just over our heads or I should not be writing this.

The most destructive shot I noticed took effect in the Thirteenth regiment, as it was marching back to resume its place in line after the surrender of the greater portion of the main rebel column. I was hurrying past with an order, when a *thud* and cry of horror close behind me attracted my

attention above the cracking of exploding shell. I turned to find a cruel gap in the column. Of a file of four men three had been prostrated by a shell, together with two officers marching by their side. The outer man was thrown to the ground but I believe not seriously injured; the second was hit and killed by the passing missile; the third was struck in the centre of the body and literally dismembered, one leg, bared of all but the shoe and stocking, being thrown several feet from the body The fragments of the shell exploding at the same moment killed the sergeant-major of the regiment, Smith, to whom I had just spoken a cheering word, and threw senseless to the ground Lieut. Col. Munson, who was walking at the moment at the sergeant-major's elbow. For a moment the men in the rear of the file which had thus been swept away halted and drew back aghast; but discipline prevailed in another moment, and stepping over their mangled comrades, they closed up the gap and marched on.

That I have made no mention of individual cases of good conduct on the field, is simply because such were altogether too numerous to mention. The troops of our brigade, being on

their first battlefield, were not greatly counted on at the outset by our corps and division generals; and as we afterwards learned, strong supports were placed back of us to take our places when we should fall to the rear. But the supports were not needed. Our men endured that fearful cannonade as steadily as the oldest veteran regiment on the field. They rose into the cast-iron tornado that was sweeping over them, as promptly as if they had been on dress parade, and when their line moved, it was to the front instead of to the rear. They took the only two guns, so far as I can learn, that were taken from the enemy during the battle, and probably lessened Mr. Lee's army, in killed and wounded and prisoners, at the rate of two or three men for every one of our own engaged. Our friends of the First brigade have been wont to call the Second brigade "the picnic party." I am sorry they were not present on the spot to see the picnic party go in, July 2d and 3d.

But one instance of unmanly want of fortitude attracted my notice among our Vermont troops. One young man, struck down by a shot which shattered one leg, as the regiment was hurrying forward, burst forth into loud entreaties to his

comrades not to leave him, and rising on one knee tried to stop them by catching at the skirts of their coats as they passed him. They could not stay, of course, and it may have been the next day possibly before he was cared for. Such was the case with many of our wounded. The rule which forbids the rank and file leaving the ranks to attend to the wounded, hard as it seems, is one of necessity, and if more rigidly enforced in all our battles would have saved a hundred lives for every one lost by it.

I was not at Gen. Stannard's side when he was wounded, having been sent by him a little before with an order to Lieut. Col. Rose, commanding the detachment of the Fourteenth Vermont which supported the Sixteenth in its charge on Wilcox's brigade. The men of the battalion had just been ordered to cease firing, when I reached their line, the enemy in their immediate front having thrown down their arms. One or two men, in their excitement, paid no heed to the order and kept on firing till fairly collared by Major Hall.

The risks of battle were, I think, more apparent to me while I was going to and fro on this errand, than at any other time; for the rebel batteries had opened afresh to cover Wilcox's retreat,

and I had to cross two places which, owing to the conformation of the ground, were receiving especial attention from them. The ground at these points was being literally swept by grape, and ploughed into long furrows by shell, and it did not look as if a man crossing them had much chance for his life; but I was fortunate enough to get down and back without being hit; and a spent ball which struck a pistol-cartridge box on my side and doubled down a Smith & Wesson cartridge without exploding it, was the only hostile missile that touched me, during the battle.

After Stannard was taken to the rear Colonel Randall assumed command of the brigade, which remained on the field, with the corps, for three days after the battle, while the old brigade with the Sixth corps, which had been held in reserve, pushed after Lee's retreating army

I rode over the ground on Sunday, from right to left; but can give but little space to the horrors of the battle-field. I have seen nothing with which to compare them, except Brady's photographic views of the field of Antietam—and there are in them no evidences of carnage at all equalling what I saw in twenty places on the

field of Gettysburg. In the open ground in front of our lines on the centre and left, multitudes of the dead of both armies still lay unburied, though strong burial parties had been at work for twenty-four hours. They had died from almost every conceivable form of mutilation and shot-wound. Most of them lay on their backs, with clothes commonly thrown open in front, perhaps by the man himself in his dying agony, or by some human jackal searching for money on the corpse, and breast and stomach often exposed. The faces, as a general rule, had turned black—not a purplish discoloration, such as I had imagined in reading of the "blackened corpses" so often mentioned in descriptions of battle-grounds, but a deep bluish *black*, giving to a corpse with black hair the appearance of a negro, and to one with light or red hair and whiskers a strange and revolting aspect. In the woods on our right, where the long musketry fight of Friday forenoon raged, I found the rebel dead (our own having been mostly buried) literally covering the ground. In a circle of fifty feet radius as near as I could estimate, I counted forty-seven dead rebels. The number of the enemy's dead in two acres of that oak grove, was estimated at 2,000, and I cannot

say that I think it exaggerated. On the knoll just on the right of the position of our brigade, occupied successively by two of our batteries on Friday, I counted the dead bodies of *twenty-nine* horses. As late as Sunday noon, wounded men were still being brought into the field hospitals, some of whom had lain on the field since Thursday

I could relate other scenes and incidents of the battle, as noteworthy as those I have mentioned, but time and space are failing me.

On Sunday night, after midnight, as I lay asleep, face up to the sky, on the field, a man shook me by the shoulder It was an orderly with a led horse, who came with a message from General Stannard, directing me to join him at the farm house several miles away to which he had been carried. The night was pitch dark, and how we made out to thread the lines of sleeping soldiers and find our way to the house, I cannot understand; but we did it before daylight. Next day I took him, in an ambulance, to Westminster, a twenty-seven mile ride, and we spent that night in a freight car, one of a train of fifty or more cars, which were filled with wounded officers. Most of them were wholly unattended

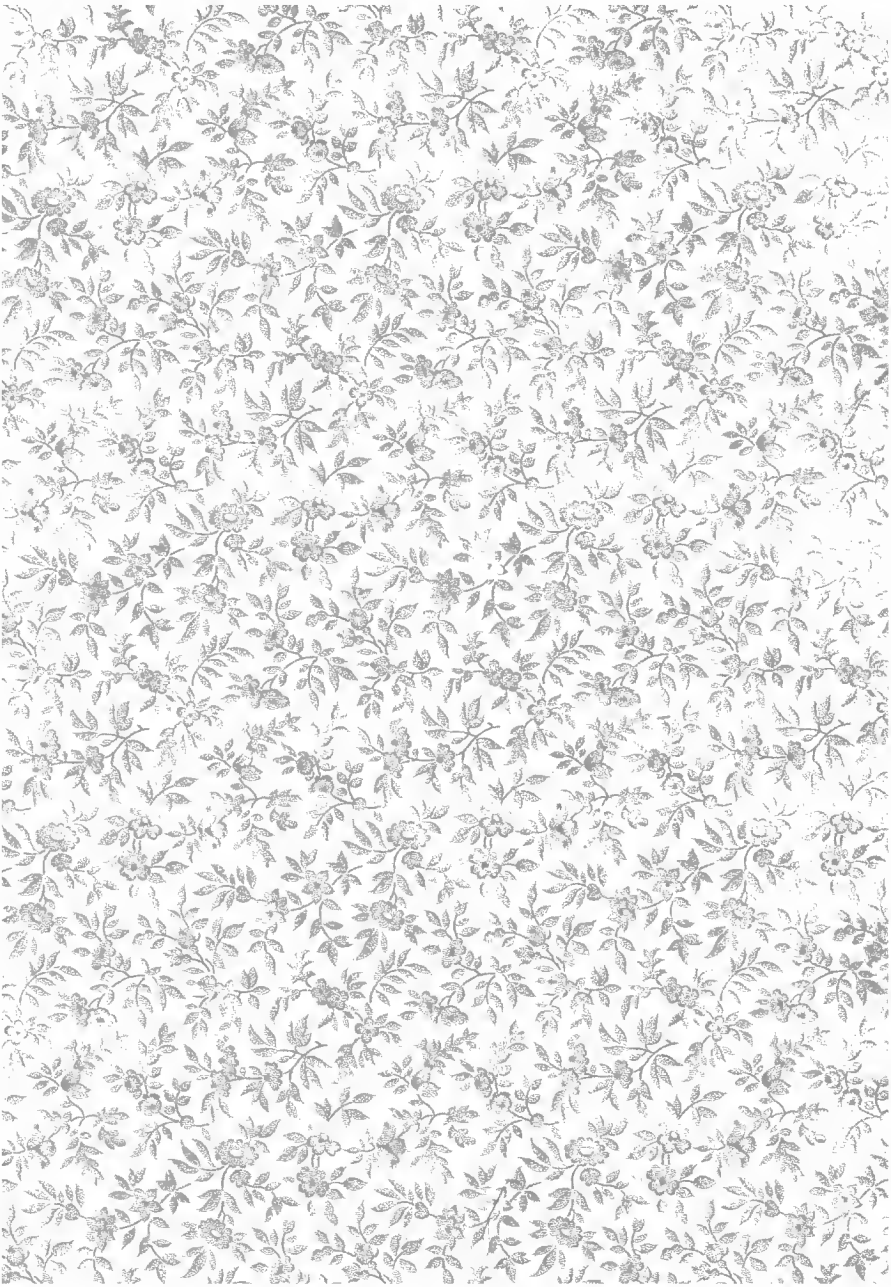
and groaned the night away on the bare floors. Of course this was the result of no intentional neglect; but the number of wounded, exceeding twenty thousand, swamped all ordinary means of relief. I left the general in Baltimore, while I went to Washington to obtain transportation for him to Vermont, whither I accompanied him a little later One of the first men I met at the War Department was Brig. Gen. Carl Schurz. He lectured in Burlington, as some will remember, just before this "great unpleasantness" began, and having seen something of the civil war of the Swiss Cantons before he came to America, he ventured the prediction that while there was sure to be war between the North and South, with us as with the Swiss one battle would settle the dispute and there would not be much bloodshed. I reminded him of his prophecy and he said he had changed his mind about our war, since then. But enough of this gossip.

The Second Vermont brigade is disbanded. The Twelfth regiment, having remained on arduous duty in the Army of the Potomac a week beyond the utmost limit of its time—for which it received the thanks of General Newton, commanding the First corps, in a highly complimen-

tary order—took its leave with the hearty good-will of all with whom it has been associated, and has been mustered out and ceased to exist as a military body. The Thirteenth has also arrived here covered with dust and laurels, and in a few days will be no more as a regiment, Two weeks more will see the other regiments on their way home.

The service of the brigade has not been what most of us expected, for we counted on active campaigns in the field, and hoped to be in at the death of the rebellion. But if less glorious than that of some, the duty which has mainly occupied us in the defence of Washington has been honorable, and more laborious than the average. And though not permitted to see within our term the close of this great war, we have been allowed to have a hand in the greatest battle that has been fought in it, and can go to our homes, feeling that with the glorious successes in the West and the opening of the Mississippi, the back-bone of the rebellion is indeed broken.

And now with prayers for the speedy triumph of the Good Cause, in the service of which it is honor enough to have had even a small share; with heartiest good wishes for his comrades in

arms, for many of whom he has formed friendships which will be life-long; and with kindest regard for the gentle readers who have received with such kind interest his hasty and unstudied sketches, your correspondent brings these letters to a close, and takes his leave of camps and army correspondence.

Yours, B.